

THE  
HISTORY OF PITTSFIELD  
MASSACHUSETTS  
1916-1955





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MASSACHUSETTS

*1916-1955*







THE HISTORY  
OF  
PITTSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS  
*1916-1955*

*by*  
*George F. Willison*



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1957



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MASSACHUSETTS  
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This volume was prepared under the supervision of  
the City of Pittsfield History Commission:

DAVID R. DALZELL

JOHN E. JOYCE, JR.

LAWRENCE K. MILLER

ROBERT G. NEWMAN, Chairman

JAMES J. SCULLARY, Clerk

10-11-12  
Mae Dean



## FOREWORD

Proud of its origins, its growth, and its accomplishments, Pittsfield has long been historically minded. That this is the fourth in a series of volumes officially commissioned by the authorities to record the community's history from the beginning is in itself a remarkable fact.

My warm thanks go to the many in Pittsfield who so generously and graciously aided me in compiling material for this book. I extend special thanks to the Berkshire Athenaeum for the workshop and the splendid facilities it placed at my disposal.

Pittsfield's story since 1916 is a fascinating one. It sharply points up what we are apt to forget — how modern "modern" is, and yet how basic human problems never change. They just get new projections, as developments in Pittsfield make clear in vivid and significant detail, adding an interesting chapter to the American story.

I hope Pittsfieldians and others will find as much pleasure and instruction in reading these pages as I found in putting them together.

To any who may think that matters of importance have been omitted or not sufficiently stressed, I say only this—that, as an historian with no axes to grind, I approached developments, incidents, and personalities objectively, and gave them such weight and space as seemed good to me.

GEORGE F. WILLISON

South Hill  
Ballston Spa, New York  
July 30, 1957

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In gathering material for this book, which carries to 1956 the history of Pittsfield begun in Joseph E. A. Smith's two volumes (1734-1800, 1800-1876) and continued to 1916 by Edward Boltwood, the City History Commission has received welcome assistance from many sources. Thanks are due to the city and county departments, the churches, community organizations and business firms which have generously answered requests for information. In addition, the following readers of the manuscript have made valuable suggestions which are gratefully acknowledged: Mrs. David J. Chesneau, Miss Fanny G. Clark, Colonel William H. Eaton, Mayor Harvey E. Lake, George A. Newman, James M. Rosenthal and Miss Ruth N. Wittan. Special appreciation is expressed to City Clerk John J. Fitzgerald and his staff for the lists of officers appearing in the appendix, to Public Works Commissioner John F. Daniels and members of his department for the Pittsfield map, and to Mrs. Leonora Goerlach, *Berkshire Eagle* librarian, for aid in assembling the photographs.





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# *Pittsfield, 1955*

## *A Summary View*

SETTLED AS A LONELY MOUNTAIN TOWN more than two hundred years ago, long the metropolis of western Massachusetts and still growing, Pittsfield lies in the heart of the Berkshires, with the splendor of the "Purple Hills" around it. A few miles to the north looms the forested mass of Greylock, not high as mountains go, but still the highest in Massachusetts, rising to almost 3,500 feet.

More than a thousand feet above the sea, the city stands on a broad plain in the upper valley of the Housatonic River—named from the Indian *Hous-aton-uck*, or Place Beyond the Mountains, and it was well named, whether approached from east or west. Gathering its headwaters here in Pittsfield, the river flows southward to empty into Long Island Sound, roughly paralleling the course of the Connecticut River about forty miles to the east and that of the Hudson the same distance to the west, divided from each by a long range of hills.

Though negligible in its influence today, the river has played an important role in the life of the community, especially in its early days, for its once sparkling waters, now unfortunately polluted, furnished the power that turned the wheels of the town's first mills—grist mills, "up-and-down" sawmills, and textile mills—the foundation of the city's later industrial growth.

It is indeed a lovely land, this high Berkshire country of gently rolling wooded hills and open sunny valleys, and Pittsfield is its center geographically and in so many other respects. Since 1868, it has been the county seat or "shire town" of Berkshire, the relatively large county that stretches some forty

miles across the western end of Massachusetts, touching Vermont on the north, New York on the west, and Connecticut on the south.

Alert and energetic, a community of more than 55,000 people—the 1955 state census gave it 55,294—Pittsfield is primarily an industrial center, and of far more importance than one might suspect at first glance. Its chief products—electrical equipment, special “money” paper, fine stationery, paper mill machinery, woolens, and silk specialties—have a national and international market.

Whenever any of us switches on electric light or power, the chances are that somewhere along the line some Pittsfield equipment or invention helped to make the push-button “magic” possible. One “made in Pittsfield” article is universally sought and prized. United States “greenbacks” are made in Washington, engraved there by the Treasury. But the special paper stock upon which the bills are engraved, from the lowly one-spot on up, comes from Pittsfield, as it has since 1879.

A rare combination, Pittsfield is at once an industrial town and a sports and recreation area, both a summer and winter playground, a mecca for vacationers and week-enders. It is the financial capital of the Berkshires. It is an insurance center. As a railroad junction and the hub of a network of main highways, it is the wholesale and retail trade center of a wide area. Its principal street, busy North Street, is Wall Street, is Main Street, is Fifth Avenue to people for miles around.

Pittsfield has made a name for itself in the arts and sciences. The annual chamber music festival on South Mountain, initiated and sponsored by Mrs. Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, enjoys international fame, being known to musicians everywhere and to music-lovers from coast to coast. One of the great American novels, perhaps the greatest, a world classic, *Moby-Dick*, was written here in 1851 by Herman Melville at his Arrowhead farm.

The SKC system for transmitting alternating electric current, a basic technique now generally in use throughout the world, was perfected in Pittsfield. Here, in 1921, flashed the first man-



made lightning bolt of 1,000,000 volts, an event of great scientific and popular interest reported in the press around the world. The local General Electric plant has pioneered many important developments in electrical theory and engineering.

In its older sections the city is still largely shaped by the pattern laid down by the early settlers. Founding their settlement as Pontoosuc Plantation in 1752, incorporating it as the town of Pittsfield nine years later, they built their first houses inside the arms of a rough "V" formed by the junction of the East and West branches of the Housatonic. Most of urban Pittsfield still lies within this "V", though recent growth has caused it to overflow and spread outward, especially toward the southeast and westward toward beautiful Lake Onota—romantically storied as the "Lake of the White Deer," though, to match the Indian legend that gave it its name, it should somewhat more descriptively be the "Lake of the White Doe."

Today, as almost from the beginning, the city centers on Park Square. The hub of community life, the scene of many stirring events and happy celebrations down the years, it is almost pocket handkerchief in size. But in the summer, with its lawn and tall trees, it is a welcome island of green in a grey sea of concrete; and in winter, at the Yuletide season, with its large community Christmas tree ablaze with colored lights, a beacon of hope and joy for all beholders. Here in the Park stood the grand Old Elm, a giant of the primeval forest, the pride of Pittsfield and a symbol of its soaring hopes for generations, down to 1864, when the lightning-scarred old tree had to be felled.

Park Square has borne down the years a great variety of names—the Green, Wendell Square, Municipal Square, and City Hall Park, among others. Its present name is a misnomer. Park Square is not square. With its corners clipped to facilitate the flow of traffic, it has become an oval, around which whirs local and through traffic day and night—private cars, buses, pick-up trucks, dump trucks, and noisy smelly diesel-powered trailer trucks as big as boxcars—creating one of the city's serious traffic problems, of which it has many.



Around Park Square stand many important buildings—the County Courthouse, completed in 1871; the odd stone pile, bastard Gothic in style, of the Berkshire Athenaeum (the public library), dedicated in 1876; some smaller and older office buildings along what is still known as Bank Row, though the banks departed years ago; the city's largest hotel, currently known as the Wendell once again; the home office of the Berkshire Life Insurance Company; the large building of the Berkshire County Savings Bank; the grey-stone First Church of Christ (Congregational), with a big clock in the tower that has been ticking since 1822; the City Hall; the red-stone structure of St. Stephen's (Episcopal); and a nondescript two-storied business block on the site of Pittsfield's first parsonage.

The small City Hall, nestled between and quite overshadowed by the two churches, is simple in line but otherwise not distinguished. A venerable structure, two stories high, its brick now covered with yellowish paint, it was built as the Town Hall in 1832 when Pittsfield's population was not a tenth of what it is today. Though more offices have been added by extending the building toward the back, the City Hall has long been inadequate. The original structure has had to be shored up many times to keep it from collapse; the City Council dares not hold meetings in the Council Chamber upstairs for fear that the floor will give way and come tumbling down on the offices below.

Building a new City Hall is largely a question of taxes. It would involve a large capital outlay, a matter of serious concern to a city that always carefully watches its budget. Putting first things first, the community has chosen in recent years to devote its large capital outlays to building more and better schools. Even so, a new City Hall stands high on Pittsfield's agenda.

Out of Park Square run the city's four main streets—North, East, South, and West, as they were rather prosaically but quite appropriately named when they were laid out broad and straight as the original roads of the town. From the point of view of modern traffic, this was fortunate, for in many New England

towns the older streets are narrow and as crooked as when they were meandering cow paths, horseback trails, or wagon roads.

For this, Pittsfield can thank its first highway surveyor, Captain John Huston, who liked to run straight lines for roads, with plenty of space for passage. His wide roads were considered a sheer waste in the early days, and those living along the highways plowed and planted right out to the edge of the dusty, single-lane wagon track, bumpy and full of ruts at all times, altogether unusable during winter snows, and a sea of mud for weeks every spring. As late as 1920, except for North Street, the city's main streets remained largely unpaved and in a "deplorable condition," as the mayor of the day admitted—a condition that has been remedied since then.

North of Park Square lies the main business district, concentrated largely along North Street. Here in the three-quarters of a mile from the Park to the Pittsfield General Hospital are the larger office buildings, the banks and other financial institutions, the department stores, the movie theatres, the specialty shops, the jewelers, the "five and tens" that now sell almost anything and everything up to \$30 or more in price, a supermarket or two, the larger of the soda fountain-bazaars still known as "drug stores," and the usual variety of businesses along a typical Main street.

Up to twenty-five years ago, almost all of the stores along North Street were locally owned and operated. Some had been in the family for generations. Today, most of the larger establishments belong to one or another of the chain-store systems, under the control of "foreign capital."

The elms that once lined North Street are gone. While rather plain, with nothing distinctively New England about it, it is a pleasant and well-kept street, reflecting an air of general prosperity. It is notable for the absence of overhanging signs, which are forbidden by ordinance. As its buildings are all more or less of a height, with no skyscrapers obtruding, it presents a long low silhouette. It might be the main street of a Midwestern town except for the mountains in the background.



Pittsfield used to be known as a "Saturday town." On that day, with streets and stores crowded, an air of bustle, excitement, and gaiety prevailed as people from all the neighborhood came in their buggies or "Democrat" wagons and tied their horses at hitching posts along the main streets as they bought supplies for the next week. Improving their opportunity, the women caught up on the gossip, children enjoyed lollipops and a soda, while the men so inclined retired to the saloons to have a drink or two—or three or four—with old friends or new acquaintances.

Today, Pittsfield is a "Thursday night town." On that evening, the downtown stores remain open till nine. Busy shoppers dart in and out of doors, laden with bundles. Friends meet and stop to chat in the street. The soda fountains, lunch rooms, and restaurants are filled with people, for this is a social occasion. While they may not have much money to spend, the evening seems to be especially popular with teen-agers and those a bit older. In small groups they wander up North Street and back down the other side, laughing and joking, shouting to friends, passing and repassing, eager to see and to be seen, particularly by those of the other sex. Though there is not so much of formal courtship about it, it is much like the *paseo* in a town of Old Spain.

West, South, and East streets have been less affected by the rising tides of commerce than North Street. But West Street, like North, has lost its trees and is commercial from the Park to the railroad station, near which stands the large plant of the Eaton Paper Corporation, known from coast to coast for its fine stationery and writing accessories.

South Street still has most of its tall magnificent elms and remains largely non-commercial, though for a few blocks it has become what is known as Automobile Row, or Gasoline Alley. Below these automobile agencies and filling stations it is residential, with many large and attractive houses set well back on broad lawns. East Street, as far as Elm, has scarcely been touched by commerce except for a few business buildings near the Park.



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To the northeast, well outside the central business district, along the tracks of the Boston & Albany Railroad, the important New England link of the far-flung New York Central system, stretches the huge Pittsfield plant of the General Electric Company, one of its larger manufacturing units. Its scores of buildings cover more than 250 acres, being chiefly devoted to making transformers, large and small, as well as high voltage equipment for the transmission and distribution of electricity. General Electric's Chemical and Metallurgical Department has headquarters in Pittsfield.

The electric transformer, it may fairly be said, built modern Pittsfield. The first of them turned out here was completed in 1891, built by the Stanley Electric Manufacturing Company which had been founded the year before by the inventor of the transformer, William Stanley, a resident of neighboring Great Barrington. In 1886, Stanley had given Great Barrington the world's first commercial electric system using alternating current—a system now almost universally in use.

Finding his opportunities limited, Stanley shifted his activities to Pittsfield in 1890, founding his company to make electrical apparatus. Original capitalization was small. It amounted to a mere \$25,000, for Berkshire investors were skeptical about the future of anything as new-fangled as electrical machinery. Establishing a small shop on Clapp Avenue, with a working force of sixteen men, Stanley began making transformers.

With little competition in the field, the company's business increased phenomenally. By 1893, it had 300 men at work making not only transformers, but generators, switchboard apparatus, rotary converters, and other devices.

Profits ran high—occasionally as high as 50 per cent, and never below 30 per cent. Capitalization was rapidly increased—to \$50,000 in 1891, to \$200,000 in 1893, to \$300,000 in 1894, to \$500,000 in 1896, to \$2,000,000 in 1900. In that year the company began constructing, in the Morningside district, a huge factory such as Pittsfield had never seen—ninety feet wide and 500 feet long—which was soon employing 1,200 men.

Buying control of the Stanley Company in 1903, the General Electric Company operated it under the Stanley name until 1907, when it formally became a unit of General Electric, which began a large expansion of its facilities at Morningside. The rapid growth of Pittsfield dates from those years. Between 1900 and 1930, the city's population more than doubled, rising from less than 22,000 to almost 50,000.

General Electric has long played a dominant role in the life and economy of Pittsfield. Three out of four of the city's wage and salaried workers are on the General Electric payroll, the community's largest source of income. At the present time, its working force averages about 10,000 persons. Most of these live in Pittsfield, but the plant is a powerful magnet drawing workers from a wide area—even from neighboring Vermont, New York, and Connecticut.

The local General Electric plant has more than manufacturing functions. It is a center of important electrical research, experiment, and technical development. Such famed "wizards" as Cummings C. Chesney, Giuseppe Faccioli, Frank W. Peek, Jr., Karl B. McEachron, and others worked some of their marvels here.

As remarked before, the first 1,000,000 volt flash of artificial lightning was produced here. It is now a commonplace to launch man-made thunderbolts of fifteen times that power. The Pittsfield works developed and manufactured the tubes for the first bazookas used by American troops in World War II. In 1954, it dedicated the world's largest anechoic chamber (a chamber without echoes) to study the "singing" of transformers.

Farther to the northeast, on Dalton Avenue, is the Government Mill of Crane & Company, paper makers, with headquarters and other mills in nearby Dalton. Long famed in the fine paper field, Crane & Company has been doing business in Dalton since 1801, when young Zenas Crane came from eastern Massachusetts to establish his first mill there, finding in the East Branch of the Housatonic the kind of clear water he needed to cleanse the old rags used in making paper.



"Ladies, save your RAGS," he advertised in the old *Pittsfield Sun*. It was not only patriotic, "very beneficial to the community at large" by encouraging local manufactories, he informed Berkshire housewives, but he would pay a "generous price" for their rags. To collect them, he instituted a pick-up system throughout the Berkshires, using the post-riders, the mailmen of the day, for the purpose. They gathered up the precious rags in the towns, and at isolated farms on back roads, as they delivered letters and passed along the latest news and gossip.

The Crane Government Mill in Pittsfield, jealously guarded by Federal Treasury agents to prevent theft, makes the special paper stock, distinctively marked by the inclusion of red and blue fibres, which is used in all of our paper currency. By law, no one can make paper containing red and blue fibres except the mill under Government contract to provide it. This balks counterfeiters, who are trapped by the kind of paper they have to use. The Government Mill also makes all the paper for United States securities.

Another phase of paper making is represented by E. D. Jones and Sons, with a factory on Depot Street. Founded in 1845, the concern began by building all kinds of machines to order, chiefly for factories in the Berkshires. Since 1900, however, its shops have specialized in machinery to make pulp for paper, producing for both the American and the export market.

If Pittsfield's economic base is now heavy industry, it was light industry—textiles—which started it on its manufacturing career. The local textile industry goes back to 1800, when a young Englishman, Arthur Scholfield, a clothier by trade, came to town and set up a carding machine a half mile west of the meetinghouse. His machine was modeled on those he had used in England. He had to make it up out of his own head, so to speak. England was rapidly striding ahead in the textile field, thanks to much newly invented equipment, and to assure her continued supremacy refused to allow the export of any such machinery.

Finally getting his machine to work, Scholfield advertised in the *Pittsfield Sun* that busy housewives could have their wool



carded at his shop "for 12½ cents per pound." The good wives of Pittsfield, as elsewhere, had been doing their carding, spinning, and weaving at home. At first, they were reluctant to trust the stranger and his even stranger machine with the precious wool upon which their families depended for clothing. But after some trial, they found that Scholfield could do a better job and save them considerable time and labor to devote to other chores. With his profits, Scholfield built a loom and went on to perfect other textile machinery, some of it the earliest of its kind in the country.

Local woolen manufacture took a long step forward in 1807. In that year Elkanah Watson came to live in Pittsfield and introduced to the Berkshires the Merino breed of sheep, brought from Spain and prized for their superior fleece. More and more woolen mills were built in Pittsfield at dam sites along the Housatonic and its tributary waters, and the Merinos kept them humming and prosperous for generations, stimulating Pittsfield's growth, at the same time providing a training school for manual skills and business experience of the greatest value later.

Most of the mills are gone now. As elsewhere in New England, the textile industry in Pittsfield has declined.

But there remain several substantial establishments—the largest being that of the Berkshire Woolen Company. It manufactures only quality goods. For men's fabrics it uses the trade name of "Berkshire," and for women's, "Cerey"—a sort of acrostic made up of the last letters of the words fabric, style, color, vogue, and quality. During World War II the company made millions of yards of cloth for military uniforms. The Berkshire's present buildings on Peck's Road, above an old dam site on Onota Brook, rank among the most attractive and efficient textile mills in the country. Since the company produces only for a special and rather stable market, it normally maintains a high level of steady employment.

Pittsfield makes specialties in another textile—silk—manufactured by the A. H. Rice Company, which in 1878 began spinning silk thread. Some was sold as sewing thread. The rest

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was made into braids for uniforms, baby bonnets, caskets, and other purposes. "Rice" is a name long known in the silk trade throughout the country. During World War II the company began spinning nylon thread, furnishing quantities of this and nylon parachute cord to the armed services.

Proud to be known as a "city of artisans," Pittsfield owes its prominence and prosperity as an industrial center less to natural advantages and resources than to the skills and ingenuity of its people. These trace their ancestry back to many countries. At first, and for many generations, they consisted almost wholly of Yankees of English stock, having come from older towns in Massachusetts and Connecticut. In the early 1840s, with the building of the railroad, came the Irish who were laying the roadbed and spiking down rails. Seeing Pittsfield and liking it and its opportunities, many chose to stay, making their homes here.

Later came thousands of other stock—Italians, Poles, Germans, Jews, Ukrainians, Portuguese, Greeks, and French Canadians, among others. For the most part, these groups have retained their traditional forms of worship and, to some extent, their social customs. But they have actively entered community life and become as much a part of Pittsfield as the oldest families.

In 1950, almost nine out of ten residents of Pittsfield were American born; most were "Berkshire-borners." Since the last great wave of immigration in 1913, when more than 2,000,000 hopefuls came to our shores, the percentage of foreign born in Pittsfield's population has steadily declined, both relatively and absolutely.

Residential Pittsfield largely consists of modest single-family houses, usually with trees about them and space enough for a lawn and garden. The houses in the new outlying districts are often very attractive. Well spaced and well designed, with pleasing lines, they tend to be semi-Colonial in style, or of the low, single-floor "ranch" type, the current fashion. In certain sections there remain some old, wooden, box-like "tenements,"



crowding the sidewalk and jammed side by side, but these are disappearing, chiefly because renters shun them.

Pittsfield has an official Planning Board to guide the city's development. On its recommendation a zoning ordinance was passed in 1953, based on a master blueprint drawn by professional experts in the field.

The zoning ordinance divided the city into fourteen "use" districts, under three main categories—residential, commercial, and manufacturing. It defined the areas where light industry and heavy industry might be established. It laid down the minimum width and minimum size of building lots. It restricted the area where two-family houses might be built. It decreed that in all future building, whether residential or non-residential, provision had to be made for off-street parking. For purposes of study, the Planning Board has divided the city into twenty-three proposed residential neighborhoods. Studies of three of these proposed neighborhoods have been completed, and more are under way.

But Pittsfield is not just its citified part. It is countryside, hillside, and lakeside, too. It is farms, and mountain trails, and ski slopes, and leaping brooks, and deep woods where, though only a few miles from Park Square, there is no faintest echo or reminder of the bustle of the city. In season, there is fishing and hunting within Pittsfield's boundaries which encompass more than forty-two square miles. Among the cities of Massachusetts, Pittsfield's area is exceeded only by Boston's.

At the northwest corner of the city, on the slopes of Honwee Mountain, is a state forest—the Pittsfield State Forest, extending over into Lanesborough and Hancock. Some 4,000 acres of quiet and unspoiled beauty, it is dotted with picnic grounds and camping sites, criss-crossed by many foot, bridle, and ski trails rolling up hill and down dale—among others, Ghost Trail, Shadow Trail, and the Skyline Trail, much traveled both summer and winter, for the Pittsfield State Forest is one of Berkshire's finest year-round playgrounds. Every winter week-end, when conditions are right, special snow trains from New York pull into Pittsfield with thousands of skiers eager to race down



the white slopes of Honwee, or try their skills on the runs down Yokun Seat Mountain a few miles southwest of the city.

At some time or other in their journeyings, millions of Americans—and many from Canada, as well—visit the Berkshires to view the splendor of its hills and sample the charms of the spacious old towns in the valleys, so distinctively New England.

Every summer tens of thousands come—many come regularly year after year—to attend the South Mountain chamber music concerts in Pittsfield, as well as the great music festival at Tanglewood in Lenox a few miles away and the classic and modern dance festival at Jacob's Pillow in Becket.

Almost all of those who come to the Berkshires, at some point in their tour, pay a visit to Pittsfield. The tourist trade, the vacation business, has become an increasingly important asset in Pittsfield's life, as elsewhere in the Berkshires.

When was Pittsfield born? Under what circumstances? What influences and accidents have shaped it? How have its people lived down the years? What have they thought and felt? What have they achieved? Who have been their leaders?

To tell the story, let us go back to the beginning.

## II

# *Pittsfield's First Half Century* *1761-1811*

STARTING IN 1628, the great Puritan migration to New England came to full tide in 1630, continuing for more than a decade. The early-comers had scarcely got settled in and around Boston when the more restless and adventuresome began pushing westward through the Massachusetts forests, soon reaching the Connecticut River valley. Springfield was founded as early as 1636. Other frontier settlements appeared up and down the valley. But here the westward surge halted for almost a century, blocked by the Berkshire Barrier, a formidable wall of rock and tangled forest.

Trappers and Indian traders early prowled westward through the wilderness into the upper valley of the Housatonic. But settlers hesitated to follow, partly because the intervening terrain was so rough, partly from fear of the Indians, for the fierce and powerful Mohawk, coming in from New York along what is still known as the Mohawk trail, frequently swept along the valley in their raids.

Conflicting claims to the territory caused confusion. Both Massachusetts and the New York colony asserted jurisdiction—New York on the basis of old Dutch claims that the boundaries of New Netherland extended eastward from the Hudson to the Connecticut River. Possession always being nine-tenths of the law, Massachusetts was very anxious to extend her settlements westward over the Berkshire Barrier. The difficulties were enormous. But at length, in 1725, Matthew Noble and others from Westfield founded Sheffield on the banks of the

Housatonic, buying a large tract there from Chief Konkapot of the local Indians.

A group of New Yorkers, mostly Dutchmen, claimed that they had already bought not only that tract, but all of the upper Housatonic valley, a claim that was impatiently brushed aside. More Massachusetts men came in with their families to settle, slowly moving up the valley. What is now South Egremont was founded in 1730; Stockbridge, in 1734; and Lenox, first known as Yokuntown, in 1750.

Meantime, settlement had been attempted higher up the valley, where Pittsfield now stands. The original impulse came from Boston. In 1735, complaining that it bore an undue tax burden, that it contributed a fifth of all taxes paid in the colony, Boston asked the General Court to grant it, as a measure of relief, some of the "wild lands" in Hampshire County, which then embraced most of western Massachusetts. The General Court made a grant, giving it the right to lay out in the wilderness three townships, each six miles square, one of which became Pittsfield.

Boston had no idea of settling these townships itself, regarding them rather as so much real estate to be turned into money as quickly as possible. In 1726, even before a survey had been made and its boundaries fixed, Boston sold the Pontoosuc (Pittsfield) township at public auction. It brought £1,320, being sold to Jacob Wendell, a prosperous Boston merchant of Dutch descent, born in Albany, New York.

To Wendell, too, this was a real estate deal. He had no intention of becoming a settler himself. Rather, he would run a survey, stake the corners of the township, divide up the land, and sell lots to those willing to brave the dangers and hardships of a wild frontier.

Wendell has long been honored as the founder of Pittsfield. In a sense, he was. But there is no evidence that he ever laid eyes on the lands he bought here. So many of our towns were similarly "founded" by absentee speculators, with small mention of and less honor to those who were first actually on the ground to build their homes there.



Wendell hired Captain John Huston, of Northampton, to run a survey. As laid out, the township was not exactly six miles square. A notch was left in the northwest corner where Honwee Mountain jogs in, perhaps because Huston found it too difficult to survey, thinking that it was worthless in any case. No farmer would buy a mountain side. Allowance was made for 1,000 acres previously granted to and laid out by Colonel John Stoddard of Northampton, founder of a family long prominent in Pittsfield.

Also, a strip about a fifth of a mile wide was added along the western boundary, to compensate for the "waste ponds" in the township. Hungry for "first-rate Arable land," the early-comers scorned these "waste ponds" which included Lake Onota and their share of Pontoosuc Lake, now among the community's prized assets.

Huston laid out two wide main roads that intersected near the center of the township. One became East and West Streets; the other North and South Streets. Along the east-west road and a smaller road to the south, he staked out sixty-four great "settling lots," each with a hundred acres more or less.\*

Wendell was now ready for business. But business was bad. Wanting a general manager, someone to stimulate sales, he took in a relative as partner—a rich New York patroon, Philip Livingston, lord of the huge Livingston Manor along the Hudson. Ignoring a proviso in the General Court's original grant that settlers were to be Massachusetts men and not "foreigners," Livingston brought in a number of New York Dutchmen in the hope that they would buy lots at Pontoosuc. The Dutchmen, however, were not at all impressed. They would not take the lands "as a gift," they declared, which left business at a standstill.

Hearing of this, Surveyor Huston interested some friends in Westfield who bought forty of the "Dutch-despised" lots for £1,200—almost as much as Wendell had paid for the entire

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\*For details on early Pittsfield, see the two-volume history of Pittsfield from 1734 to 1876, by J. E. A. Smith, who did tremendous spadework in unearthing the origins of Pittsfield and its story for a century or more. This and the following chapter, a brief review of important events down to 1861, are based largely on Smith, though the facts are somewhat differently stressed and some new material has been added.

township. The work of clearing the lots began early in 1743. But work soon ceased when the men fled, alarmed by rumors of war with the French and Indians. Five years passed before any returned to start over again. Log cabins went up, fields were cleared, and soon Pontoosuc had its first family—that of Solomon Deming, from Wethersfield, Connecticut, who rode in on horseback in 1752 with his young wife Sarah on the pillion behind him.

Others followed, some to rise to prominence in the early town—among them, David Bush, young Nathaniel Fairfield with his bride, Oliver Root, Hezekiah Jones, Deacon Stephen Crofoot and his brother Simeon, Captain Charles Goodrich, “driving the first cart and team which ever entered the town.”

Also came Colonel William Williams, a rather flamboyant character, who brought a new vigor to affairs. Son of a minister, a Harvard graduate, once a doctor and then a merchant, he had subsequently become a soldier in the British service. No name in Pittsfield’s early annals looms larger than that of Williams, who served the town and county in any number of capacities from time to time—as chief justice of the common pleas, as moderator of the town meeting, as selectman, assessor, clerk, hog-reeve, colonel of militia, and representative to the General Court.

By 1753, when the settlement sheltered some two hundred people, it was incorporated as “The Proprietors of the Settling-lots in the Township of Pontoosuck.” Under the charter, the settlement was virtually a private corporation run for the benefit of the proprietors. They exercised all powers. Only they had a voice in community affairs. The new government levied taxes for roads, bridges, and other public improvements, and for building a school and a meetinghouse. By law, every Massachusetts town had to provide for schooling and the support of an “orthodox” ministry. “Orthodox” signified Congregational—and no other.

Building was again interrupted. With the outbreak of the French and Indian War, the town was almost depopulated as men fled with their families from this exposed frontier. The



town records are a blank from August 1754, to September 1758, by which time some settlers were beginning to return, protected by three small redoubts—Fort Anson, Fort Fairfield, and a third on high ground along the southwest shore of Lake Onota.

The common lands were now divided up into great "squares" containing from 230 to 326 acres each and allotted to the proprietors in proportion to the shares each had in the enterprise. Some 5,600 acres fell to Wendell, including the beautiful Canoe Meadows with the knoll upon which a house was later built by his grandson, the literary Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, who spent some summers in Pittsfield—"seven blessed summers," he wrote, "which stand out in memory like the seven golden candlesticks in the beautiful dream of the holy dreamer."

Proprietary government came to an end in 1761 when the settlement was incorporated as the town of Pittsfield, named in honor of the great British statesman, the elder William Pitt, always a friend of the colonies. At the same time, the western part of Hampshire was cut off and set up as Berkshire County. Sheffield was designated to be, "for the present, the shire or county town." The General Court decreed, however, that the county courts should sit in Pittsfield twice a year for the convenience of central and northern Berkshire.

In May 1761, Pittsfield's first town meeting gathered at Deacon Stephen Crofoot's house on Elm Street. The first order of business was to elect officers—a moderator (David Bush), a clerk (William Williams), a treasurer (David Bush), three selectmen and assessors (William Williams, David Bush, and Josiah Wright), a constable (Jacob Ensign), three highway surveyors (David Bush, Gideon Goodrich and Eli Root), two fence-viewers (Nathaniel Fairfield and William Francis), two wardens (Solomon Deming and David Noble), a sealer of leather and of weights and measures (Simeon Crofoot), and two deer-reeves (John Remington and Reuben Gunn).

A few families, it is clear, monopolized the more important offices, a situation that persisted for years. Yet the new govern-



ment was far more representative and democratic than the old, though it was certainly not democracy as we know it today. Only men of property could vote, only those with an estate or a "faculty" rated at £20 a year.

Moving ahead, Pittsfield began to improve and extend its roads, to build more and better bridges. In consonance with its new dignity, it made other "improvements," building stocks and a whipping post, and a workhouse in which to jail vagrants. Pittsfield welcomed only men of property, freeholders. No matter what their character, poor itinerants were "warned" out of town. Work went forward on the meetinghouse, with workers receiving, according to a good old custom, liberal potions of rum to cheer them on and hasten their labors. But progress was painfully slow. Begun in 1761, the meetinghouse was not properly finished nine years later when the congregation reluctantly agreed to accept it as it was.

A small, wooden, barn-like structure, it stood approximately on the site of the present First Church of Christ, in the shadow of the towering tree that became renowned and beloved as the grand Old Elm. At the back was the burying ground. Beyond were fields dotted with a few trees and many stumps. Here on these stumps, if the weather was good, the members of the congregation ate their lunch during the brief "nooning" between the two Sunday services, morning and afternoon. After eating, the women exchanged the latest news, children moved about decorously (for this was a Puritan Sabbath), as the men stepped across the road to enjoy in Deacon James Easton's tavern their Sunday mug of flip, then as traditional and well regarded as two-hour sermons.

Pittsfield had almost as much difficulty in finding an acceptable minister as in finishing the meetinghouse. The town showed itself to be quite "choosey," a trait that Pittsfield seems not to have lost in matters either secular or divine. Not many years ago, so the story goes, there was a sign in the wings of a Boston theatre designed to give pause to any performers whose heads had been turned by easy success.

"If you think you're good," read the sign, "try Pittsfield."

Beginning in 1759, the town made trial of five ministers, one after the other, and found them wanting. At length, in 1764, it made a happy choice, deciding to "settle" the Reverend Thomas Allen, at a salary of £60 a year, plus forty cords of firewood. Born at Northampton in 1743, a recent graduate of Harvard, Allen was only twenty-one at this time.

Entering his new duties with great zeal, the pastor brought in thirty-one new communicants his first year. He was also very active in civic and political affairs—being far too active, growled some, who later charged him with "indiscreet zeal," principally because he was an outspoken democrat of the Jeffersonian school. But in spite of many trials and tribulations, Parson Allen continued to labor in this corner of the vineyard till his death more than forty years later, founding a family that was prominent in Pittsfield for generations.

In 1764, after much talk, the town began building its first schools—three of them, all "well shingled," with wooden floors, a brick chimney for the wood stove, and four large windows, with twelve panes of glass to the window. The largest school, twenty-two feet square, gave its name to School Street. By the time of the Revolution, Pittsfield had five schools, one in each of the school districts—east, northeast, center, west, and southwest.

The town had been growing and thriving. More and more grist mills, sawmills, and fulling mills had been built along the Housatonic and its larger tributaries. More and more ground had been cleared and put to the plow. The number of livestock had greatly increased. Many farms were now producing a surplus. Markets for this produce had been found to the west, principally because transportation was easier and cheaper that way. Wheat, cheese, wool, bacon, smoked beef, salt pork, hides, and other things were carted to the New York towns of Kinderhook, Hudson, and Albany, where they were transshipped by water down the Hudson to the larger centers on the coast. By 1772, Pittsfield had more than 800 inhabitants, some of them very prosperous.



Writing to relatives at this time, urging them to come to Pittsfield and share its prosperity and blessings, Colonel William Williams became almost ecstatic. The soil was good, the air was good, the temperature was good, almost everything was good. He had formerly suffered much sickness and excruciating pain, he wrote, but not since coming to Pittsfield. In fourteen years he had not missed public worship.

"All my doctor's bill has been a gallipot or two for the itch . . . And another indisputable proof of the goodness of the country is the prolific behavior of the female sex among us. Barren women beget (if not bring forth) sons. Women that have left off for 5, 6, 7, or 9 years begin anew . . . as many as two at a birth, after residing a suitable time among us. And to mention but one thing (though I might mention many more), no man or woman of but common understanding that ever came and got settled among us wished themselves back.

"The air suited them, they felt frisk and alert, or a something endeared their situation to them; this with regard to the women. The men perceived soon the difference in the soil; and put what you would upon it, it would yield beyond what they were acquainted with. This prompted them to labor, and when they came in, either by day or night, their wives would give them a kind hearty welcome." So encouraged, many a man arriving as "poor as a church mouse" had made a fortune. Most of the first settlers were prosperous.

"Come to this town and see Goodrich, Brattle, Bush, Hubbard, Wright, Crowfoot, and Ensign, who, strictly speaking, were in debt when they came . . . Come and see . . . But delays are dangerous; we have had five wholesome families come in this winter . . . I can assure you our land grows in repute faster than any around us."

But Pittsfield's prospects, however bright, were shadowed by a cloud that was overspreading the whole land. Tension between Britain and the colonies was rapidly rising. The conflict resounded throughout the Berkshires, causing a deep split in all communities as matters reached the breaking point—with the loyalists, or Tories, arrayed against the Whigs, the Liberty



Boys, the "patriots." The leader of the Pittsfield Tories was Woodbridge Little, the first lawyer in the town. Behind him stood the powerful Williams and Stoddard clans. Temporarily commanding the town meeting, this group had Pittsfield officially condemn the Boston Tea Party as "unnecessary and highly unwarrantable," as an "extraordinary and illegal transaction"—which it certainly was. Those responsible for the "riot," the resolution concluded, should be brought "to condign punishment"—which, if carried out, would have meant the hanging of Sam Adams, John Adams, John Hancock, Joseph Warren, and all of Boston's leaders in the struggle against the Crown.

But the Pittsfield Tories were quickly routed. Led by Parson Allen, the local Liberty Boys had the town protest the closing of the port of Boston, the quartering of British troops on the populace in the seacoast towns, the suspension of the sessions of the General Court, the prohibition against holding any town meeting in the colony without the express permission of the royal governor. Pittsfield joined the general movement throughout the colonies to boycott British goods until these "intolerable acts" were repealed. It created a local Committee of Correspondence to join Sam Adams' rapidly expanding network of revolutionary organizations. Neighboring towns did the same.

"The popular rage is very high in the Berkshires," the royal governor at Boston complained, "and makes its way rapidly to the rest."

In the Berkshires, the first organized resistance to royal authority occurred in Great Barrington. In 1774, more than 1,500 men assembled there, many of them armed, and "persuaded" the county judges, all holding a royal commission, to suspend their hearings. The judges promptly fled, and this was the last royal court to sit in the Berkshires.

At Pittsfield the Reverend Allen came under sharp attack for his spirited support of the colonists' cause. The local Tories, he remarked, "were the worst in the Province." Colonel William Williams, Major Israel Stoddard, and Woodbridge Little formally charged him with "rebellion, treason, and sedition." The town meeting, however, did not agree, finding the charges

"groundless, false, and scandalous." Allen, it resolved, deserved the thanks of all for his efforts "to defend the rights and privileges of the people of this Province."

His chief accusers, as well as other open and covert Tories, now tacked about and decided to sail a more prudent course, hoping to ride out the storm without loss to themselves, being most anxious not to have their estates confiscated if the colonists should triumph. Some even wormed their way back into the good graces of the town, being again entrusted with responsible offices. But the antagonism engendered at this time cropped up again and again in later years.

Meantime, James Easton—soldier, deacon, tavernkeeper, general contractor, builder of the first school—had taken command of the Berkshire militia, succeeding Colonel William Williams, who had been displaced for his Tory views. At the same time Captain David Noble recruited a company of minutemen from Pittsfield and Richmond, equipping them at his own expense with arms, buckskin breeches, and "coats of blue, turned up with white," summoning a breeches-maker from Philadelphia to tailor their bright "regimentals." This company almost immediately saw action.

On April 21, 1775, two days after Paul Revere's midnight ride and the clash of arms at Lexington and Concord, a horseman came galloping into Pittsfield to report the news. By sunrise the next morning, Captain Noble and his blue-coated boys marched away to Cambridge where they joined the thousands of militiamen pouring in from other parts of Massachusetts and all of New England.

The war was on, and Pittsfield contributed its full share in men, in money, and in sacrifice to the long and often agonizing struggle for liberty and independence, an almost incredibly daring and at times seemingly hopeless fight against the mightiest empire in the world.

As the fighting spread, farmer-soldiers from Pittsfield took part in many campaigns. In larger or smaller numbers, they were at Bunker Hill, at Ticonderoga, Crown Point, Bennington, Saratoga (one of the decisive battles of the world), White



Plains, Trenton, and Princeton. They fought in other battles down to the day in 1781 when, in far-away Virginia, trapped by Washington's armies and their retreat cut off by the fleet of our French allies, the British forces under Lord Cornwallis had to surrender at Yorktown, the last large action of the war.

When peace was formally restored, in 1783, with the signing of the Treaty of Paris, there was a great celebration in Pittsfield, as joyous as any it ever held. All paraded through the streets singing, cannon boomed, and festivities ended with a happy party in what has since been known as the Peace Party House.

A clapboard structure, three stories high with a gambrel roof, the celebrated house stood in 1955 at the corner of East Street and Wendell Avenue, having been moved there almost a century ago to make room for the County Courthouse which occupies its original site.

Construction of the house began about 1776, under the direction of Colonel James Easton, whose tavern was close by on South Street. Financial difficulties arising from the Revolution forced Easton to sell the house, which came into the hands of John Chandler Williams, a rising young lawyer—distinguished among his colleagues as "the honest lawyer." Distantly related to Colonel William Williams, the formerly powerful local magnate, young Williams had also married a Williams—Lucretia, daughter of Colonel Israel Williams, a stubborn Tory who spent some time in the Northampton jail for his outspoken views.

A woman of spirit and strong conviction, Lucretia shared her father's Tory views, even though her husband was an ardent patriot. To the end of her life she declared her loyalty to the British Crown and never referred to the Revolution as anything but the "Rebellion." But at the renowned Peace Party in her house, she seems to have been a friendly and delightful hostess, perhaps feeling that any peace was better than the devastations, hardships, brutalities, and bloodshed of war.

Old and young, men and women—the latter mounted on pillions behind their husbands or sweethearts—came riding on



horseback from near and far to enjoy the party, which was very gay indeed and long remembered. There were tubs of strong rum punch for the guests. Wine and cider quenched the thirsts of those who preferred something less potent. A half ox had been roasted for the occasion, as well as geese and turkeys.

The beaming company, as spirits rose, sang many rousing songs, drank toast after toast, cheered again and again, and listened as patiently as they could to speech after speech by such as always take advantage of festive occasions. At length, the music struck up and the laughing company ended the evening with dancing. They, like all Americans, had good cause to rejoice.

But peace brought its problems, too. The war had disrupted trade and commerce, bringing on an economic depression that was particularly severe in western Massachusetts. The towns and the state, disregarding the situation, were levying high taxes to reduce the heavy indebtedness incurred during the war—taxes that many simply could not pay without sacrificing almost everything they owned. The distressed began demanding the abolition, or at least the reform, of the “aristocratic” State Senate, holding that body largely responsible for their ills, declaring that it was not representative of the common people, which was true enough. As then constituted, the Senate represented the well-to-do, being dominated by wealthy merchants and shipowners along the seaboard.

At the same time, a tangled mass of private debts was causing widespread trouble, generating bitter personal conflicts that filled the courts with complaints and counter-complaints. During the war a moratorium on the payment of private debts had been declared. But interest on such debts went on, steadily compounding. As interest rates were very high, many debts were now twice what they originally had been, and this at a time of falling prices for all produce. Farmers found that it took a great deal of mutton at 2d a pound to meet the claims of creditors who were sharply demanding payment.

Debtors, for the most part, were small farmers who, sacrificing their personal interests, had marched off as soldiers to risk their lives in the cause of Independence. Creditors were largely those who had stayed at home and profited from the war. Throughout the country, there was no love lost between these two groups.

Returning soldiers and the bereaved families of the fighting men who had perished in the struggle had many just and real grievances. Many a soldier had not yet been paid for his services. Those being paid were not much better off, receiving it in paper money that had sunk rapidly in value until it was practically worthless—"not worth a Continental," in the phrase that has passed into the language.

Creditors refused to accept this paper money at its face value, demanding to be paid in gold or silver, which had long since gone into hiding in the coffers of the more prosperous. A succession of poor crops in the Berkshires made the plight of local farmers that much worse. Many a one heard the sheriff pounding on his door, summoning him to court where, as often as not, his livestock and his farm and even his house with its furnishings were sold at public auction to satisfy his creditors or the tax collector, or both. And there were all sorts of men ready to take advantage of his undeserved plight by bidding in his property at a mere fraction of its worth.

"Here I have made an advantageous purchase, and *live in the midst of those who owe*," reads a letter from Pittsfield at this time, written by Henry Van Schaack, a wealthy Tory who, driven from New York, found haven in Pittsfield. "I have made some other purchases about me, and I have a number of mortgages in the neighborhood so that I shall, in all probability, be a considerable landholder in a little time . . . If any of your friends wish to migrate, by way of encouragement you may assure them that lands are cheap and good in Berkshire . . . All that I want in my delightful retreat," he told his Tory correspondent, "is a few people of your sort about me."

Times might be good for the Van Schaacks and others eagerly waiting to foreclose on their mortgages. Affairs bore a very



different aspect, however, to those who were about to lose their lands—in many cases, the very acres that they themselves had cleared and brought into cultivation by tremendous toil.

Those threatened with ruin, through no fault of their own, became increasingly angry and determined to resist what they regarded as rank injustice. They were particularly incensed against the old law, a crusty semi-feudal relic, under which a man unable to satisfy his creditors was unceremoniously thrown into jail, to remain there until he had paid his debts—a cruel and nonsensical procedure, because a man could not begin to pay his debts so long as he was locked up in some filthy prison.

The distressed had wide sympathy and support so long as they confined their agitation to demands for redress and orderly reform. They and their sympathizers were often in control of the Pittsfield town meeting during these years. Sympathy and support among moderate-minded men dropped off when the discontented began taking things into their own hands and resorting to violent measures, feeling themselves being pressed relentlessly to the wall as their complaints went unheeded.

In 1784, an angry and determined crowd of eight hundred, many from Pittsfield and neighboring towns, gathered at Great Barrington and “persuaded” the court there to suspend hearings so that no more judgments could be handed down against Berkshire debtors. The “silk stockings” in the neighborhood took to their heels, the crowd broke open the jail and released the debtors incarcerated there. A similar incident had occurred at nearby Northampton not long before. Rebellion was also brewing in several eastern counties.

These “mob” actions—“mob” actions had been highly “patriotic” in the Revolution just a few years before—thoroughly frightened the conservatives who complained that “evil men were endeavoring to subvert the Constitution of the Commonwealth and poison the minds of the good people of the State.” The moderates became alienated, even such staunch friends of the common people as Pittsfield’s pastor.

Though sympathetic toward them and their troubles, Allen could not tolerate anything resembling an insurrection against



the new and hard-won order of things and opposed with all his usual vigor any idea of overturning it by force, arousing many bitter enmities that pursued him to his grave. Tension ran so high in Pittsfield that Allen thought it wise to keep a pistol at his bedside, and walked circumspectly at all times.

But notwithstanding spirited opposition in Pittsfield and other towns, this did not prevent Eli Parsons from leading four hundred Berkshire men to join the forces of the insurgents' commander-in-chief, Captain Daniel Shays, of Pelham, near Amherst. A Revolutionary War veteran with a good record, Shays had fought bravely at Bunker Hill and Saratoga.

Open rebellion broke out late in 1786, just before Christmas, when Shays led a force of a thousand armed men into Springfield and then to Worcester, forcing the courts in both places to close. He then marched back to Springfield and demanded the surrender of the U. S. Arsenal there, seeking guns to arm his rapidly growing forces.

A large militia force was guarding the Arsenal. When the rebels ignored commands to disperse, the militia fired into their ranks, killing three. The rest fled, pursued by 4,000 militiamen under General Benjamin Lincoln, who soon shattered Shays' forces. General Lincoln had his headquarters in Pittsfield for a time as his men chased scattered rebel bands through the Berkshire hills. The last battle took place not far to the south, on a back road between Sheffield and South Egremont, where a small rebel force of a hundred men was utterly routed.

Fourteen of Shays' men were sentenced to die on the gallows. Almost half of these—six, to be exact—were from the Berkshires, including Samuel Rust of Pittsfield, another Revolutionary War veteran. Many more were jailed or fined. All who had supported the insurrection in any way, even by lip service, were disenfranchised for a time.

The Commonwealth had the good sense not to be vengeful and vindictive, tempering justice with mercy. It was anxious to bury the past and allow old wounds to heal, refraining from any steps that might rekindle the strife that had divided the towns throughout the Commonwealth.

The disenfranchised had their civil rights restored after they had taken a new oath of allegiance. This oath was required of thirty-one in Pittsfield. None of those condemned to death had to pay the extreme penalty. Of the six Berkshire men sentenced to be hanged, Samuel Rust of Pittsfield and two others were pardoned. One had his sentence commuted to seven years' imprisonment. Two others escaped.

Even Captain Shays was pardoned after a time. Retiring to Sparta, New York, near Ossining, he died about thirty years later, having fallen into obscurity after shooting across the horizon with a brief flash that might have sparked a general conflagration, for discontent in all the states was near tinder point.

Though still a rather isolated country town, wholly dependent upon its farms, Pittsfield was steadily growing. By 1791, its population numbered almost two thousand, a tenfold increase since its incorporation thirty years before. It was a "pretty town," so a South Carolina Congressman recorded at this time when he passed through on his way from Hartford to Albany. Coming by way of Westfield and Becket, he had a very hard time getting his carriage over what an earlier traveler had termed the "horrid mountains." The going was all uphill and downhill, and the road was the "most execrable that was ever travelled by a carriage," groaned the Congressman, "a narrow track through the forest, the path full of huge rocks and loose stones"—the usual state of mountain roads at the time. If they were wise, people traveled on horseback.

Coming out at length on a high point, the Congressman was delighted, having a "most enchanting view of the prodigious extent of the country, cultivated throughout and intermixed with woods. At a great distance below us, Pittsfield appeared beautiful in this plain, and the whole afforded a rich scene, strangely contrasted with the gloomy forest and uncomfortable rocks we had left behind."

The growth of the town necessitated the building of a new and larger meetinghouse. Plans for it were drawn by a renowned Boston architect, Charles Bulfinch. He had designed



scores of simple, beautiful churches in New England, but is perhaps best remembered today as the architect of the Capitol in Washington, and of City Hall, Faneuil Hall, and the State House in Boston.

To make room for Pittsfield's new church, which was to be fifty-five feet wide and ninety feet long, it was decided to chop down the towering elm that had shaded the first meetinghouse. When axemen arrived to start work, Lucretia Williams came running across the road from the Peace Party House and begged them to spare the tree. When her pleadings proved of no avail, she threw herself between the axemen and the tree, and refused to budge.

As she could not stand there forever guarding the tree, her indulgent husband John Chandler came to the rescue and made a proposition. If the meetinghouse were built well back from the elm, which meant moving the site northward, he would give to the town an equal measure of ground south of the tree. His offer was accepted. Not only was the grand Old Elm saved, but the town acquired the common, or green, or park, that has ever since been the heart of Pittsfield.

To finance construction of the meetinghouse, which cost almost £2,200, the town levied an assessment on all taxpayers. This aroused determined protests by the local Baptists, Shakers, Methodists, and Episcopalians who, perhaps two hundred in all, did not worship in the Congregational meetinghouse. This caused sharp disputes, but there was no escape for these dissenters from the "standing order."

The Baptists had formed a congregation in the West Part as early as 1772, organized by a zealous clothier, Elder Valentine Rathbun, who had been very active in the Revolutionary cause, often being called upon to represent the town.

In southwest Pittsfield there was a Shaker community, inspired by the teachings of Mother Ann Lee, who expounded the doctrine of life-long celibacy. There were to be no children born in the bosom of her church—rather self-defeating, it would seem, for if the whole world accepted her doctrine, as she hoped and prayed, there would be after a generation nobody



except a few "sinners" to inherit the earth and the fullness thereof.

The Methodists began meeting in both the East and the West Part in 1788, holding their "classes" wherever they could—in private homes, in schoolhouses, in barns, in open fields or the woods.

The Episcopalians, few in number and all Tory in background, met more or less regularly for lay services, usually at the house of Henry Van Schaack, who in 1781 built for himself south of the town a handsome mansion known as Broadhall. Dutch Colonial in style, the mansion still stands, now occupied by the Pittsfield Country Club.

All of these congregations lay under the disabilities of an old law, a relic of early Puritan days, which made every town government officially responsible for the establishment and maintenance of public worship. It imposed a general tax for this purpose.

Theoretically, each town could decide by majority vote what form of worship it wished to support. But practically, inasmuch as the early Puritans and their descendants always constituted a huge majority in the towns, it meant that the Congregational meetinghouse was the established church in every community. All religious taxes and assessments went to its support. Any objections to this in the early days had been ruthlessly crushed; "heretics" were driven out, or hanged, as many Quakers were in Boston.

The law had become less severe and now carried this proviso. If a tax-paying dissenter, say a Baptist, could prove that he regularly attended a Baptist church, and if the authorities accepted that church as *bona fide*, and if the church were incorporated by law—which many dissenting churches were not—then the dissenter might ask to have his religious tax payments transferred to the congregation to which he belonged.

It was an unfair arrangement, subject to many abuses. But it prevailed down to 1834 when Massachusetts at length separated Church and State, placing all denominations upon an equal basis. Religious freedom in Massachusetts was not estab-

lished by either the Pilgrims or the Puritans. It was won by the Quakers, Baptists, Episcopalians, Methodists, and others willing to battle for their rights. And it was a long, hard, bitter fight.

The issue was first joined in Pittsfield in 1790, with the building of the second meetinghouse. The Baptists led by Elder Valentine Rathbun and the Episcopalians under Henry Van Schaack combined in a formal protest against any town action "to assess or burthen one religious sect of Christians for building places of religious worship for another." Nor should "any part of the town property [some school lands had been sold to raise money for the meetinghouse] be applied for purposes but what are actually for town uses."

Contrary doctrines, they declared, "tend to subordinate one sect or denomination of Christians to another in direct violation of the Constitution of the Commonwealth, and contrary to the practice of Christians in general in the United States of America."

The town evaded the direct issues, keeping a discreet silence on the sale of school lands for religious purposes, which was plainly illegal. Offering a compromise on the other matter, it decreed that dissenters had to pay the assessment for building the meetinghouse. But if they so desired and made proper application, the moneys received from them would be paid to their respective churches. Nobody was happy about this, but the issue was soon overshadowed by a clash that shook the meetinghouse and the town to their foundations.

Current politics occasioned the clash, but the cause went deeper, back to the Revolution. Parson Allen, always an ardent democrat of the Jeffersonian school, passionately believed in rule by the people. The doctrine was now under heavy attack by the Federalist Party which controlled both Massachusetts and the national government. The Federalists were quite openly and aggressively anti-democratic. They believed in strong government by the well-born, by the wealthy, by the "aristocratic." Some even flirted with monarchical ideas. The common people, in the Federalist view, constituted a "hydra-headed monster"



that had to be curbed at all times and beaten to the ground if necessary.

Apart from domestic issues, the public mind was inflamed and deeply divided by happenings abroad—in particular, by the great French Revolution of 1789 and the events that followed: the triumph of the *sans-culottes*, the overthrow of the feudal aristocracy, the declaration of the Rights of Man, the proclamation of the French Republic, the dethroning and execution of the King, the Reign of Terror under the Jacobins and Robespierre, the rise of Napoleon and his all-conquering armies.

The Federalists saw the French Revolution merely as bloodshed and atrocities, a wild and dangerous anarchy, a brutal orgy by the mob. While the Democrats did not condone the bloodshed and atrocities, they saw the Revolution for what it fundamentally was, as time proved—the painful birth of a new order, an earth-shaking triumph of the common man, a final breaking of the feudal bonds that had held Europe in chains for centuries, the harbinger of greater freedom for the individual, no matter what his station in life.

American opinion became even more sharply and acrimoniously divided when Britain declared war on the French Republic. The Federalists, many of whom had been Tories, were loudly pro-British. The Democrats were just as loudly pro-French. The division poisoned social and business relations, driving a wedge between old friends, even splitting families.

Rancor reached white heat with the approach of the 1800 national election. To their opponents, the Federalists were “blood-suckers . . . stock-jobbers . . . heartless enemies of the people.” To the Federalists, the Democrats were “firebrands . . . anarchists . . . criminal slanderers . . . traitors . . . and of all villains,” thundered President Timothy Dwight of Yale, “the most infamous and detestable.” Their leader, Thomas Jefferson, was a disgusting “atheist” and incendiary “Jacobin” — which sounds very much like political debate as carried on today.

When the voting was over and the news came that Jefferson was the next president, the Federalists felt, quite literally, that



the world had come to an end. It had, as a matter of fact, for them. They never again regained power in Washington. But they fought on elsewhere with even grimmer determination and more arrogant pretensions, hoping for the day when they would be returned to power "to save the country"—an occupational obsession with all parties.

The temper of the Federalists can be judged by the extreme views of the able, cultivated, and otherwise moderate Theodore Sedgwick of Stockbridge. Sedgwick, wrote his distinguished daughter Catherine, was the kindest of men, scrupulous in all his dealings with high and low.

But, she said, he "habitually spoke of the people as 'Jacobins, sans-culottes, and miscreants.' He—and in this, I speak of him as the type of the Federal Party—dreaded every upward step they made, regarding their elevation as a depression." The common people could not be expected to feel the "moralities" of government, or understand its abstractions. There could be no good government "without a strong aristocratic element." As for Jefferson, he was "false, the type of evil."

Many in Pittsfield shared these views, which were anathema to Parson Allen and his friends. The American Revolution, they declared, had not been fought and won for the benefit of some self-styled aristocrats, many of whom had safely sat out the war, or had even actively opposed the American cause. His first duty to God and man, the Pittsfield pastor decided, was to preach the gospel of liberty and human rights, which he frequently did from the pulpit.

This was not "a regrettable innovation," as some complained. Then, as now, preachers often sermonized on non-religious matters. Allen had been preaching democracy since 1776 and before. But times had changed. The majority of his congregation, including most of its wealthier parishioners, were Federalists. They were becoming increasingly annoyed and angered by his "pulpit discourses," formally advising him to let politics alone.

Allen found a new and spirited ally in his nephew, Phineas Allen. Coming to town in 1800, the latter founded Pittsfield's first successful newspaper, the *Sun*, which continued pub-

lication for more than a hundred years. Under its founder and first editor, the *Sun* was frankly partisan, faithfully supporting Jefferson and his followers in whatever they said and did. Democrats, apparently, could do no wrong. The *Sun* offered Parson Allen a new outlet for his zeal and ideas, and he contributed to it many leading articles under his own name and various *noms de plume*, as the scowls grew deeper in many of the better pews in his church.

In March 1807, the disgruntled named a committee, headed by Woodbridge Little, the erstwhile Tory, to draft a "letter of remonstrance" to the pastor. He had preached, in their view, more than one "offensive political and electioneering discourse." His sermons were "constantly interlarded with politics," and "most pointedly irritating and insulting." Many of the "uncandid and injudicious" in the congregation were "indecently grinning their smiles of approbation" as the pastor spoke, "to the disturbance of public worship."

Allen had proposed a toast, "No compromise with Federalists, no concurrence with neuters." This was as much as "drawing the sword against us," said the complainants. "We complain of your publications in the *Sun*, and more particularly of that 'On the Death of Hamilton'."

Some critics even levelled the charge—which appears to be false—that at the funeral of his son John, the pastor had used his sermon as a platform for another discourse on "republicanism and democracy," extolling them as "the very essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ," which, to some, seemed little less than blasphemy.

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All of these charges were "false and malevolent," the pastor replied. Their pride hurt, their patience at an end, the dissidents met at the Town Hall, built in 1793, where the red stone church of St. Stephen's now stands. There, in the summer of 1807, they decided to secede from the First Parish—a schism that split the town from top to bottom and caused scandal throughout the Berkshires. Attempts to restore peace and unity failed. Woodbridge Little and 108 others incorporated themselves as the Union Congregational Parish and soon built a

meetinghouse on South Street. As their minister, they called the Reverend Thomas Punderson from New Haven.

In the midst of these distractions, broken in health but not in heart, the Reverend Thomas Allen died in his 67th year, on February 11, 1810, having ministered to his parish for forty-six years. A gentle soul with a flaming spirit, an eloquent preacher and a forthright democrat, a student and writer of history and philosophy, and a man of action, too, as demonstrated on the battlefields at Bennington, Ticonderoga, and White Plains, he was sincerely mourned by friends and critics alike. No man in Pittsfield's annals, either early or late, has wielded greater influence in the community than "Fighting Parson" Allen in his day.

Buried in the old "eternity acres" just behind the meetinghouse, his remains were first removed to the graveyard on First Street and later to the Pittsfield Cemetery, where, on Pontoosuc Hill, his grandson and namesake erected the obelisk that stands there to his memory, recalling the days when Pittsfield was little more than a clearing in the wilderness.



### III

## *From the War of 1812 to the Civil War*

PARSON ALLEN'S SON, the Reverend William, Pittsfield-born and a man of thirty-seven, a graduate of Harvard, later a professor at Dartmouth and the president of Bowdoin College, succeeded to the pulpit in the old meetinghouse. As the new pastor had been hotly engaged on his father's side in the controversies raging about him, the change did nothing to quiet debate and assuage animosities. Indeed, the contentions grew more heated with the approach of the War of 1812.

New elements, economic rather than political, kept the Democratic-Federalist conflict boiling. The Napoleonic wars were raging, and both the British and the French were unlawfully interfering with American commerce on the high seas, seizing without warrant many ships flying the Stars and Stripes. In a very high-handed manner, the British were impressing our merchant seamen for service in the Royal Navy.

In retaliation, the Jefferson administration prohibited the importation of a long list of British goods, chiefly manufactures. This hurt British industry. But it hurt even more the business of our larger merchants, especially in the bigger cities along the seacoast, for infant American industries could not begin to supply the needs of trade. The merchants had plenty of customers, but little to sell, which was exasperating.

Trying to preserve a precarious neutrality, anxious to keep our ships out of harm's way, Jefferson next laid down a strict embargo that swept American ships off the seas by prohibiting

trade with any foreign country. This struck the New England seaport towns a stunning blow, especially Boston, where hundreds of ships lay rotting in the harbor, to the impotent rage of shipowners, bankers, merchants, and unemployed seamen. The Federalists found many new supporters in their ranks, less from sympathy with the Federalists' basic philosophy than because that party was belligerently anti-administration.

In 1812, President James Madison, Jefferson's political heir, declared war on Great Britain. This did nothing to help Massachusetts' carrying trade. Federalists went to great lengths in their opposition to what they sneeringly called "Mr. Madison's War," declaring that the country should be fighting not the British, but the French.

With the Federalists in control, Massachusetts refused to allow its militia to be used outside its borders. It gave little and very grudging financial support to the war, and took the lead in calling the Hartford Convention in 1814. There, in secret session, Federalist delegates from all New England talked obliquely about nullifying the Federal Constitution, taking the same stand on states' rights, including the right of secession, that the South did a half century later in precipitating the Civil War. This was too much, and the bitterly partisan Hartford Convention sounded the death knell of the Federalist party, which rapidly disintegrated.

The War of 1812 and the events leading up to it, whatever their effects elsewhere, brought a new burst of prosperity to Pittsfield. The non-importation and embargo acts stimulated its infant industries. With the outbreak of hostilities, Pittsfield became an important military center. A large cantonment was built on the east side of North Street, not far above the present railroad tracks of the Boston and Albany. Hundreds of soldiers went through the camp each year, being drilled and trained before they were sent north and west to the battlefronts.

Still strongly Democratic in sentiment, the town voted to buy a large stock of ammunition; it offered a \$10 bounty to any who volunteered for service. At a town meeting, all parties in Pittsfield, even the Federalists, "came forward unanimously



and sacrificed at the shrine of their common country all their animosities and dissensions in support of true American principles," reported the *Sun*. Pittsfield's Federalists were not as stiff-necked as their brothers elsewhere.

Pittsfield took great pride in its local infantry company, the Berkshire Blues. The men looked stunning in their dark blue coats turned up with red, their pantaloons of the same color, and their tall leather grenadier caps sporting a plume of red and black. Pittsfield was also represented in the 9th and 21st infantry regiments, which fought well in American victories at Chippewa, Lundy's Lane, Niagara Falls, and Fort Erie.

As the soldiers moved to the front, the cantonment along North Street was transformed into a detention camp for captured British soldiers and sailors, holding as many as a thousand at a time. They were often unruly, but Pittsfield treated them with unusual kindness and humanity, allowing many of them to earn a few extra dollars by "hiring out" to responsible local people. Few of the prisoners attempted to escape. Still fewer got away.

The organizer and general superintendent of the cantonment was Thomas Melville, who had been commissioned a major in 1812, shortly after his return home to Boston after living more than twenty years in France. Major Melville had the task of feeding and clothing the men at the cantonment. He bought as much as he could locally, which stimulated agriculture and industry for miles around.

"Cash, cash," Major Melville promised in advertising for the many things he needed—great quantities of woolens and other cloth, leather, beef, pork, vegetables, grain, hay, horses, wagons, wood, iron, and numerous other items. This gave a great lift to Pittsfield's farms and to its small and struggling industries just then getting well started.

As briefly noted before, Pittsfield's industrial history began in 1800 when a young English clothing worker from Yorkshire, Arthur Scholfield, came to Pittsfield and built a small shop down West Street, a half mile from the meetinghouse, on the banks of the West Branch of the Housatonic.



Here, in his shop, he set up a carding machine, fashioned on closely guarded English models, and informed Pittsfield's hard-working housewives that they could "have their wool carded into rolls for 12½ cents per pound; mixed, 15½ per pound. . . . They are requested to send their wool in sheets as these will serve to bind up the rolls when done. Also, a small assortment of woolens for sale."

As general everywhere, the women of Pittsfield had been doing their carding, spinning, and weaving at home. They were at first very skeptical about Scholfield's newfangled contraption. But after giving it a trial, they discovered that Scholfield could do a faster and better job at moderate cost, and it soon became a familiar sight to see Scholfield's wagon going down West Street with a load of wool, or coming back up with finished rolls neatly wrapped in linen sheets pinned with thorns.

Dignifying his small shop as "The Pittsfield Factory," Scholfield advertised that, in addition to carding wool, many other enterprises were carried on there—such as "dyeing of wool of various colors, making of chairs of various kinds, cut and wrought nails, marble monuments, Rumford fireplaces, common stone for building, hulling and perling of barley, etc., etc." What the "etc., etc." stood for, in view of the small size of the shop, is difficult to imagine. In any case, here was Pittsfield's first multiple-purpose industrial plant.

In 1806, Scholfield sold his carding business so that he might devote himself entirely to the manufacture and sale of machines for the woolen trade, successfully making picking machines, comb plates, looms, spinning jennies, and spindles, among the first machinery of the kind in the country.

Though his sales were good, Scholfield did not prosper as a businessman, being too trusting in his accounts. He announced that he would extend no credit—a rule he forgot to his great cost. He lived his last years in very straitened circumstances, dying in a small cottage on West Street near his "Pittsfield Factory," which had long since passed into other hands.

At the time when Scholfield was busily producing new and better machines, the local woolen industry unexpectedly gained

a new friend and advocate, Elkanah Watson. A man of wealth and many talents, Watson came to live in Pittsfield in 1807 and remained for some years, establishing himself and his family in Broadhall, buying the mansion from Henry Van Schaack, who retired to his old home in Kinderhook, New York.

A friend of Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and other distinguished men, Watson had traveled widely in Europe and America, studying public and private improvements—paving, lighting, canals, and industrial techniques, to cite a few. A successful businessman, he was now primarily interested in the improvement of agriculture and related enterprises. More particularly, he was interested in breeding sheep that would give more and better wool.

Merino sheep, prized for their fine fleece, had been introduced into the country from Spain and Portugal in 1802. In coming to Pittsfield, Watson brought with him two prize Merinos—a ram and a ewe, the first of their breed in New England. In the fall of 1807, a few months after his arrival, Watson exhibited these on the green under the Old Elm, arousing considerable public interest.

As many farmers, “and even females, were attracted to this humble exhibition,” this set Watson to speculating.

“If two animals were capable of exciting so much attention,” he asked himself, “what would be the effect of a display, on a large scale, of different animals?” Here was the genesis of the Berkshire Agricultural Society for the Promotion of Agriculture and Domestic Manufactures, organized in 1811, with Watson as president and Arthur Scholfield as one of the trustees.

A cattle show had been held the year before, one of the first such shows in the country. But the new society planned to make its first formal event something much more elaborate and exciting. It was to be a big county fair, with all of Berkshire represented, a carnival in which everybody could participate.

An enclosure was built around the Old Elm for the exhibit of the best specimens of livestock. Prizes were small, running from \$5 to \$10—the Society could afford no more. To please



and amuse the crowd, the more enterprising set up on the green a number of booths for the sale of refreshments and Yankee "notions," as well as a "fandango," or "aerial phaeton," evidently a sort of ferris wheel. Putting their differences on the shelf for a time, Federalists and Democrats joined together to enjoy as gay a few days as Pittsfield had had.

After the usual speeches, with the marshal of the day and his aides galloping about on white horses, a large procession got under way at noon on a beautiful September day, with the surrounding hills a blaze of scarlet and gold under a high blue sky.

First came the Pittsfield Band, playing "very inspiring and creditable." Then came sixty yoke of oxen, harnessed in chains and drawing a plow held by Charles Goodrich, one of the first settlers—the farmers of Berkshire carrying a flag "representing a sheaf of wheat on one side and a plough on the other"—a wagon with a platform to exhibit such Berkshire manufactures as rolls of broadcloth, bolts of cotton duck for sails, handsome rose blankets, nails, anchors and leather—another wagon with a platform, bearing a large loom with a flying shuttle and a spinning jenny of forty spindles, which skilled workers busily operated as the parade moved along. Finally marched the officers and members of the Berkshire Agricultural Society, with heads of wheat in their hats, the badge of the organization.

Altogether, said Watson with pride, the procession was "splendid, novel, and imposing beyond anything of the kind ever before exhibited in America." The fair was repeated the next year and, with added features, every year for almost a century, down to 1902.

Other agricultural organizations had preceded the Berkshire Society, but these had been limited in membership chiefly to "gentlemen" farmers and specialists. These organizations made little or no appeal to the interests and sentiments of the people at large.

The Berkshire Society was unique in being the first of its kind to be aimed at the ordinary farmer. It sought to kindle his imagination by showing him what could be done. It provided



a pleasant occasion at which he might talk shop and perhaps have a drink or two with fellow-farmers, not to speak of the excitement that his often lonesome wife and children found at the annual fairs.

Watson early realized the importance of interesting "females in the operations of the Society," which offered many prizes for their handiwork. Open to anyone, with dues set at a mere \$1 a year, the Society radiated a wide influence, becoming the model of similar organizations throughout the country, as many of them gratefully acknowledged.

Encouraged by the efforts of Scholfield and Watson, the Pittsfield Woolen and Cotton Factory was incorporated in 1809 by a number of prominent local citizens, but no manufactory was established by them. Two years earlier, in 1807, many of these same men had founded Pittsfield's first bank, the Berkshire Bank. A small counting house was built on the south side of Park Square, where the Berkshire Athenaeum now stands, along what was then named and is still known as Bank Row.

But one of the directors played fast and loose with the funds, and the bank collapsed—and with it, the Pittsfield Woolen and Cotton Factory, which languished and died when the directors of the bank, the Factory's largest stockholders, were imprisoned for debt. Under the law as it then was, they were held personally responsible for the bank's losses. After a time in the jail at Lenox, which had replaced Sheffield as the county seat, the prisoners were released and returned to Pittsfield, many to find that they had been reduced to paupers.

The second attempt at making woolens on a large scale was somewhat more successful. Organized in 1812, the Housatonic Manufacturing Company built a mill on the East Branch of the Housatonic. Around the main building were four dwellings, a store, a fulling mill, and a dye house. As cash was hard to come by, the company offered to accept raw wool, flax, firewood, soap, and all kinds of farm produce in exchange for its woolens, except for those dyed indigo blue—a favorite color and expensive to make. The company prospered during the War of 1812 and then suffered ups and downs until the 1830s when it

ceased operations after a spring flood had carried away its power dam.

As the Housatonic was a Democratic mill, there had to be a Federalist mill, so the Pittsfield Woolen and Cotton Factory (the same name adopted by an earlier group of entrepreneurs for the abortive corporation of 1809) was founded in 1814 by a group led by Lemuel Pomeroy. They built a substantial brick mill on the West Branch of the Housatonic for making fine broadcloths. The company began operations just as the War of 1812 ended, and it suffered severely, as did all American industry, in the usual post-war depression.

But it managed to weather this and other storms. Slowly expanding, it increased its facilities by buying the building and mill site of "The Pittsfield Factory" established by Scholfield. In 1839, the name of the firm was changed to Lemuel Pomeroy & Sons, later to L. Pomeroy's Sons. Under that name it continued to operate for a half century, until it fell a victim to the great financial panic of 1893.

The tariff of 1824, sponsored by Henry Clay as the cornerstone of his "American system," encouraged local industry, and in 1825 the Pontoosuc Woolen Manufacturing Company was founded, building a factory on the West Branch of the Housatonic, near its outlet from Pontoosuc Lake.

With Henry Shaw of Lanesboro as president and Thaddeus Clapp of Pittsfield as general manager, this was one of the most successful of the early enterprises. Its broadcloths and cassimeres, so many said, "were not excelled by any cloths imported from Great Britain," and had a wide market. One of the honored names in Pittsfield's industrial history, the Pontoosuc company continued to do a successful business for more than a hundred years, down to the 1930s, when, like so many enterprises, it perished in the Great Depression.

Other early mills included the New Woolen Factory, built in 1811 by Daniel Stearns on the Southwest Branch of the Housatonic close to its outlet from Richmond Pond. Stearns built other mills to enlarge his plant for the manufacture of broadcloths, cassimeres, satinets, and flannels. The community



that grew up around these mills in southwest Pittsfield became known as Stearnsville, later as Barkerville when J. Barker & Brothers took over in 1861, an already established firm that became one of the more prosperous in later years. The Stearns enterprise became J. Stearns & Brothers in 1826, and D. & H. Stearns in 1843, under which name it continued down to its bankruptcy in 1881.

Several more woolen enterprises of lasting importance began in these years, but will be discussed later. The Osceola Woolen Mill, built in 1833, was bought in 1864 by Otis L. Tillotson, a man of prominence in later years. Solomon N. and Charles Russell began making cotton batting in an old iron forge along Onota Brook in 1843. They leased the Wahconah woolen mill in 1856, and in 1863 built a three-story brick mill of their own along Onota Brook, one of the best factories Pittsfield had yet seen. The S. N. and C. Russell Manufacturing Company, as it was named in 1886, was a landmark on the Pittsfield industrial scene for many years.

Beginning as manufacturers of tinware in a small shop on East Street in 1816, J. & E. Peck branched out into textiles, erecting in 1844 a mill along Onota Brook for the manufacture of cotton warping, later adding a flannel mill. The Peck factories closed down in 1910.

Among their other troubles, transportation difficulties hampered Pittsfield's early manufacturers. The first through roads were built by turnpike companies which hoped to make a profit from charging tolls. But the roads were so wretched that few used them, with the result that tolls were low, the roads got worse, and the companies went broke.

By 1825, Pittsfield travelers and shippers had the choice of three turnpikes. One ran from Northampton through Pittsfield to the New York border, where it met another road laid out to Albany. Another came into Pittsfield from Russell, in Hampden County. The third and best, the Pontoosuc Turnpike, ran from Pittsfield to Chester, where it connected with a road joining the southern Berkshires and Springfield. Difficult to con-



struct, most of these roads were expensive to maintain and risky to travel because of precipitous grades.

Indeed, such was the state of the roads throughout Massachusetts that sensible men seriously talked of building a canal from Boston to the Hudson River. One of the proposed routes would have come through Pittsfield—to take advantage of its streams and lakes!

But the favored route ran some miles to the north. How to get over the great hump of the Hoosacs presented a problem. But the promoters easily solved that by saying that they would drive a four-mile tunnel through the mountains, picking almost the exact spot where a tunnel was later driven for the railroad tracks of the Boston and Maine.

But now came the iron horse to kill the canal project and put the turnpike companies out of business. Organized in 1831, the Boston & Worcester Railroad began running trains in 1834 and its tracks reached Worcester the next year. In 1836, the Western Railroad began building westward from Worcester to Albany. Its tracks reached Springfield late in 1839. Construction was somewhat delayed by a fight between Pittsfield and Stockbridge on which way the line should run, each claiming that it offered the best route. Surveys favored running the tracks through Pittsfield and so it was done, a decision of transcendent importance in the history of the town, which might otherwise have withered on the vine.

The first train into Pittsfield—a locomotive and one car—crept in on May 4, 1841. By the end of the year trains were running from Boston to Albany—two each way a day, morning and afternoon, for passengers. The afternoon trains laid over for the night at Springfield. Freight service was provided by one train a day each way, and the freights soon brought the first coal Pittsfield ever used. It had been a wood-burning town. Nor did it take quickly to coal. The first shipment lay a long time near the depot, until it was finally carted off “by persons unknown,” without protest from anybody.

The first depot, a fantastic wooden contraption of pseudo-Egyptian design, stood over the tracks on the west side of

North Street. Passengers boarded or left the trains in a dark, dank, greasy, and smoky tunnel below, having to climb long flights of steep stairs to reach the waiting room above. A locomotive spark set fire to the depot in 1854, and the flames presented "a beautiful spectacle" as they consumed the building, which "was never so much admired as during the last half hour of its existence." A new wooden depot of simpler lines and greater convenience was built a little farther to the west on what has since been known as Depot Street.

Other rail connections were soon established. A branch was built north from Pittsfield to North Adams. Pittsfield and Berkshire County capital built the Stockbridge and Pittsfield Railroad, which began operations in 1850. This road tied up with a chain of railroads extending down to Bridgeport, Connecticut, where there were connections to New York City, offering Pittsfield a new outlet. This chain of railroads, known as the Housatonic, became in time the Berkshire Division of the New York, New Haven & Hartford, with Pittsfield as its northern terminal.

Since 1800, when it became the largest town in Berkshire with a population of 2,261, Pittsfield had been steadily growing. Between 1800 and 1840, its population more than doubled. It went on increasing, though not quite so rapidly, reaching 8,045 in 1860. Growth brought many new developments, and many new problems as well. As its industries grew, so did the town's financial institutions.

In 1818, a number of local men, both Democrats and Federalists, joined to incorporate the Agricultural Bank with a capital of \$100,000. After the debacle of the Berkshire Bank a decade before and the ruin of some of its directors, they may have had their qualms. But they confidently pushed ahead, appealing "to the moneyed interest in the county to embark in the bank and rear it for the public good." Buying the building of the defunct Berkshire Bank, it started business there with Thomas Gold as the first president and Ezekiel R. Colt as cashier.

Still a powerful force in the community today, the Agricultural Bank was very successful from the beginning, supplying



the financial needs of a wide area and paying high dividends to its shareholders. It had no local rival until 1853, when the Pittsfield Bank was chartered with a capital of \$150,000. Its directors chose David Carson as president and Junius D. Adams as cashier. Meantime, in 1846, the Berkshire County Savings Bank had been organized, choosing as its president Henry Shaw of Lanesboro, who was succeeded the next year by George N. Briggs of Pittsfield, then governor of Massachusetts, serving as the state's chief executive from 1843 to 1850.

As houses and factories in the town multiplied, the fire hazard grew proportionately. It was not until 1814 that Pittsfield bought its first small fire engine, with leather buckets and other appurtenances, but no suction hose.

To spread the cost of fire losses, the Pittsfield Mutual Fire Insurance Company was organized in 1819. It failed after a few years, having made the fatal mistake of not charging premiums upon policies when issued. Instead, it tried to collect assessments after losses had occurred. It was succeeded in 1835 by the Berkshire Mutual Fire Insurance Company, which is still doing business from its Pittsfield headquarters. The first policy it wrote, one for \$750, covered St. Stephen's Rectory, which then stood on North Street.

For better protection, a fire district was set up in 1844, about two miles square, with the green approximately in the center. In School Street, at a cost of \$540, an engine house was built, thirty feet square and two stories high, with stalls to accommodate a hook-and-ladder cart and two engines, one of which was christened the *Housatonic*. To man this, volunteers formed the Housatonic Engine Company. Another company, the Pontuosuc, took charge of the second engine, the *Fame*. There was a third engine in town, the *Union*, belonging to the Western Railroad, which kept it near the depot. This constituted Pittsfield's fire department for many years.

Water, too, was a problem. Beginning in 1795, many attempts had been made to pipe water into the town. But all failed for one reason or another—either because the source of supply dried up, or the gravity fall was not sufficient to create



pressure, or the pipes cracked up. The want of water to fight fires was particularly worrisome.

But nothing much was done about the water supply until 1855 when, after five years of discussion, it was arranged to draw water from Lake Ashley, a pond of sixty acres located high on Mount Washington.

More than \$44,000 was spent in trying to raise the water level of Lake Ashley by building a dam, which proved to be deficient, and in laying miles and miles of concrete pipes, which promptly froze and burst because they had not been laid deep enough. Some water flowed, however, and the Lake Ashley project was finally put in good repair, but at many times the original cost, as the town found to its dismay.

As for public schools, those in Pittsfield seem to have been average for the time, though they would certainly not be acceptable today. Many of the school buildings were wretched, as parents complained. No special training or qualifications were required of teachers. It was usual practice, except in the central districts, for schools to be taught by men in winter, and by women in summer. By 1844, Pittsfield had so grown that it had fifteen school districts. Each was almost sovereign in its territory. A recommendation by the State Board of Education that the district system be abolished was stoutly opposed.

The town agreed, however, that it had to do something about the schools and in 1849 started a new program. The districts were to furnish suitable sites and keep the buildings in repair, while the town would shoulder the burden of building new schoolhouses, two a year, beginning in those districts that most needed them. School appropriations in 1860 totalled \$6,300.

In 1827, a committee of three had been appointed—M. R. Lanckton, Thomas B. Strong, and Thomas Melville, Jr.—to consider whether the town should establish a separate school for "black children." Upon the committee's unanimous recommendation, the town refused to take any measures whatever in that direction.

By early Massachusetts law, every town had to provide a grammar or high school on pain of being fined for failure to do

so. Pittsfield had evaded this law until 1793, when it established a grammar school class in Town Hall. These classes ceased in 1824, and almost thirty years passed before the town again took up the question. In 1850, after some debate, the town voted \$3,000 to build a grammar school, Pittsfield's first proper high school, on the northeast corner of the old First Church burying ground. It opened later that year with Jonathan Tenney as principal.

During the first sixty years of the nineteenth century, a number of private schools flourished in Pittsfield—the Pittsfield Female Academy, founded in 1806 and later known as the Pittsfield Young Ladies' Seminary—the Pittsfield Young Ladies' Institute, founded by the Reverend W. H. Tyler in 1841, which later became the Maplewood Young Ladies' Institute—and the Berkshire Gymnasium, a school for young men, founded in 1829 by Professor Chester Dewey, son-in-law of Lemuel Pomeroy, who financed the institution.

For some years Pittsfield had a college—the Berkshire Medical Institution, chartered in 1823, largely through the efforts of Dr. Henry H. Childs, one of Pittsfield's most highly regarded citizens in spite of his ultra-Democratic views. The college was established in the old three-storied Pittsfield Hotel, and twenty-five students enrolled in its first class, paying \$40 tuition a year. Board, room, and laundry cost them \$1.75 a week.

Fire destroyed the college buildings in 1850. The state granted \$10,000, the people in Berkshire contributed \$5,000, and a new large building was erected on South Street. The average enrolment from 1823 to 1835 was about eighty-five. It reached a high point of 140 in 1846. Thereafter it steadily declined until 1869 when the college closed its doors, selling the South Street building to the town, which remodeled it for use as a high school.

As the town grew, the growth of the churches kept pace. The breach in the Congregational meetinghouse over Parson Thomas Allen's political zeal was closed in 1817. Under the agreement, the pastors of each section of the divided church resigned—the Reverends William Allen and Thomas Punder-



son—and the Reverend Heman Humphrey was brought from New Haven to minister to the reunited congregation. Humphrey, who resigned after six years to become president of the Amherst Collegiate Institute, soon to become Amherst College, brought to Pittsfield a radical new notion—nothing less than total abstinence from alcoholic drink.

Humphrey was aided and abetted in spreading this “heresy” by the local Baptists under their leader, Elder John Leland. The temperance movement had been growing, but Leland regarded its aims as far too moderate. It was he who first persuaded the friends of temperance in Pittsfield that the cornerstone of their faith should be total abstinence not only from hard liquor, but from wine and beer—and even cider. All of the large merchants in town sold liquors, but many were now persuaded to stop the practice. The old custom of lifting the cup that cheers on almost any and every occasion began to disappear.

Inspired by Elders Leland and Augustus Beach, the First Baptist congregation built and dedicated a new church in 1827. A well-proportioned brick structure, with spire and tower, it stood on North Street, in the northwest corner of the old burying ground. The church seated more than four hundred, but a larger church was soon needed. The new one, built in 1849, was eighty-two feet long and sixty feet wide, with a high steeple bearing a gilded cross, which the wind took down a few years later.

The town granted the Methodists a lot on North Street in 1829, not to be occupied for a church, but as a grant of land to assist them in building elsewhere. The Methodist Episcopal Church built on East Street the same year was a rather plain brick structure with a spire. The congregation worshipped here until 1852, when a new church was built at the corner of First and Fenn Streets, a wooden structure seating six hundred people, with a chapel and classrooms in the basement. When the congregation moved to the new church, some members split off and continued to worship in the old East Street church, organizing themselves as the Wesleyan Methodist Church, which continued to meet for some years, down to the 1860s.



There had been Episcopalians in Pittsfield since the Revolution, but never sufficient of them to organize a local congregation until 1830, when twenty-two organized themselves as "St. Stephen's Church, Pittsfield." They held their first services on South Street, in the old Union meetinghouse, which had been turned into a lecture room, choosing as their first minister the Reverend George Thomas Chapman, a scholarly man who had been teaching at Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky.

Desiring permanent quarters, the Episcopalians wished to build at the corner of Allen Place and School Street, offering the town \$500 for a lot there. This caused difficulties, for the lot was occupied in part by the Town Hall, in which the central school district had an interest, using two of its rooms as classrooms. To solve the difficulty, Lemuel Pomeroy made the town a proposition:

The old Town Hall was too small for the community's needs, he said, and a larger one should be built. If the Town Hall were conveyed to him with sufficient ground to build a church, and if the town provided a lot equidistant between the proposed Episcopal church and the old Congregational meetinghouse, he would erect at his own expense a new Town Hall. The offer was accepted. A new brick Town Hall, still in use today as the City Hall, was built in 1832.

On the site of the old Town Hall rose St. Stephen's, a stone structure of Gothic design. In 1851, to accommodate the growing congregation, the church was enlarged and remodeled inside and out. A stone tower replaced the original wooden one.

The first Roman Catholic services in the town had been held in 1835 by a visiting priest, the Reverend Jeremiah O'Callahan. Though there were few Catholics in the town, Father O'Callahan and other priests regularly visited Pittsfield until 1844, when the Reverend John D. Brady bought a lot on Melville Street and built a small church there. A number of Irish who had worked on the construction of the Western Railroad settled in Pittsfield, and the congregation grew. Plans were made for

the construction of a large church, a subject to be considered later.

In 1859, some of the four hundred or more German Protestants in Pittsfield organized the German Lutheran Church. With the Reverend Augustus Grotian as pastor, the congregation first met in private houses. Later, the First Congregational Church offered it the use of its lecture room for worship. It continued to hold services there until 1865, when it built a church on First Street.

Meantime, the old Congregational meetinghouse had again been split—but this time, amicably. The congregation had become too large for the old meetinghouse, and in 1848 it was agreed that those who wished might be dismissed.

Organizing themselves as the South Congregational Church, they began building a new meetinghouse at the head of South Street, next to the old Union meetinghouse. During the course of construction, fire broke out and both buildings were utterly destroyed. Beginning again, the congregation erected a handsome wooden church with a spire, dedicating it late in 1850, with the Reverend Samuel Harris of Conway as pastor.

For a time after the dismissal of so many of its members, the First Congregation continued to meet in the old wooden meetinghouse built in 1790. Many changes had occurred in it. Its first organ was installed in 1816 but allowed to fall to ruin. Instrumental music was provided by a bass viol, a violin, and a flute down to 1846 when a second-hand organ was brought from Boston. Though having had no previous experience with the instrument, Helen Dunham, daughter of a deacon, became the organist at a salary of \$100 a year and evidently gave satisfaction.

In 1851, fire broke out in the meetinghouse and did considerable damage. The old structure could have been repaired for \$2,500, which was covered by insurance. But the majority of the congregation wished a larger and more substantial church. As a consequence, the old frame meetinghouse designed by Bulfinch was removed to become the gymnasium of the Pittsfield Young Ladies' Institute.



Money for a new church was raised by a practice known as "dooming." Under this, a committee assessed against each man a semi-voluntary tax based not only upon his property, but his personal interest in the project. The members of the congregation were divided into various classes—the first asked to contribute \$600; the second, \$500; the third, \$400; and so down to \$100. The "dooming" raised \$16,700, and plans for a stone church were drawn by a New York architect. The plans were much too elaborate, having to be cut again and again to meet the congregation's limited resources.

The church that resulted was nevertheless impressive. Constructed of gray Pittsfield limestone, "Elizabethan" in style, with low walls and a very high roof, it still stands on Park Square. The clock in the tower came from the old meeting-house, having been given to the congregation in 1822 by Joseph Shearer, who had married the widow of Pittsfield's first great magnate, Colonel William Williams.

The widow was the third of Colonel Williams' wives. His friend Colonel John Stoddard once said of Williams and his wives that he "married first, Miriam Tyler, for good sense, and got it; second, Miss Wells, for love and beauty, and had it; third, Aunt Hannah Dickinson, and got cheated like the devil."

Widow Hannah succeeded to her husband's extensive lands and whatever her faults, was ardently courted as a wealthy woman. Her hand was won at last by an enterprising man, Joseph Shearer, twenty-six years her junior. Both appear to have "got cheated like the devil," for the marriage was a most unhappy one.

On three or four occasions, Mrs. Shearer publicly accused her husband of plotting to do her to death by ingenious stratagems, such as leaving a well uncovered so that she fell into it, and of tricking her to mount an unbroken colt so that she almost broke her neck. Shearer was once actually brought to trial on her charge of plotting murder, but the evidence was inconclusive, except in his wife's eyes.

Perhaps just for spite, Hannah lived on and on for almost thirty years, down to 1821, when she died at the age of ninety-



one, and Shearer at last could enjoy life and Hannah's fortune alone. But not for very long, for death claimed him about fifteen years later. Today, seeing the old Shearer clock in the tower of the First Church, one wonders: was it a joyous thanksgiving offering for being free of his wife at last, or an act of penance for trying to hasten that much-desired end?

Down the years, Pittsfield had had its trials and troubles. But as the centenary of its incorporation approached in 1861, it looked back with some satisfaction and pride at what it had accomplished. Within a century it had grown from a small rustic village of scarcely two hundred to a bustling town of more than 8,000. It had contributed its full share of devotion and sacrifice to the War of Independence and the War of 1812. It had established a prosperous textile industry, chiefly engaged in making woolens from the superior fleece of the great flocks of Merino sheep pastured in the valleys and on the hills round about. It had three strong banks, a life insurance company, and a mutual fire insurance company, all of them doing an increasingly wide and profitable business.

Every year, at the end of the summer, people from all over the Berkshires and from neighboring states came to the three-day county fair at the exhibition grounds of the Berkshire Agricultural Society on Wahconah Street—an institution already a half century old. The town was becoming the trading center of an ever larger area.

So far as Pittsfield's own immediate prospects were concerned, they seemed very bright. But a mighty storm was gathering and already shadowed the whole land. There were rumblings of thunder—or was it guns?—as the North and the South faced each other, locked in furious debate over slavery, the right of secession, and related issues.

## IV

### *Pittsfield: 1861-1915*

THE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY of the incorporation of Pittsfield fell on April 21, 1861. But it passed with little notice, for nine days before, precipitating the gravest crisis the United States had ever known, rebel forces in South Carolina opened fire on Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor, bringing to an open clash the long-smoldering conflict between the North and the South. The Civil War had begun.

Anticipating a call to arms, Massachusetts responded quickly in sending its soldiers forward. Pittsfield's militia company was one of the first to march—the renowned Allen Guard, which soon won a place for itself on the town's honor roll beside the names of Captain David Noble's company of Minutemen of 1775 and the Berkshire Blues, Pittsfield's pride in the War of 1812.

After the dissolution of the Berkshire Blues in the 1830s, Pittsfield had no militia company until 1853, when the Pittsfield Guards were organized. This company led a languishing existence for some years down to the summer of 1860 when the town, prodded by the State House in Boston, made an appeal for funds to equip the company properly and breathe some life into it. The appeal brought in \$2,000, with \$1,500 of this being contributed by Thomas Allen, grandson and namesake of Pittsfield's first minister, "the Fighting Parson," who had rallied the town's forces for liberty and independence during the Revolution and later had outraged his richer parishioners by his



forthright preaching of Jeffersonian democracy, causing a wide schism in church and town.

But the old sharp differences between Whigs and Tories during the Revolution, and between Democrats and Federalists in the years preceding the War of 1812, had now been forgotten. As the Civil War approached, Pittsfield was unanimous in its support of the Union cause.

To honor their chief benefactor, the Pittsfield Guards were rechristened the Allen Guard. As their first captain, the company chose Henry S. Briggs, son of one of Pittsfield's most distinguished citizens, George N. Briggs, member of the Congress from 1830 to 1841 and governor of the Commonwealth from 1843 to 1850. Under Captain Henry Briggs, who rose rapidly to become a brigadier general, the Allen Guard built up its strength and was soon in fighting trim.

On April 17, 1861, four days after the fall of Fort Sumter, orders came that the Allen Guard should join the 8th Massachusetts Regiment without delay, being the only company in western Massachusetts honored by the Commonwealth in its first call for troops. At noon the next day, with bells ringing and amid great excitement, the Allen Guard was drawn up in Park Square, seventy-eight strong, resplendent in uniforms of gray and gold, soon to be laid aside for the prosaic blue of field service. After the usual speeches, the company marched through cheering crowds to the railroad station and entrained for Springfield, where it joined the 8th Massachusetts and proceeded south toward the battlefield.\*

Shortly after the Allen Guard departed, President Lincoln issued a call for 75,000 volunteers to serve three years. Massachusetts had to raise six regiments as its quota. One of these—the 10th—was recruited in the western counties. To this, Pittsfield contributed a company known as the Pollock Guard. Early in May 1861, this company went into camp on the extensive grounds of the Berkshire Agricultural Society on the west side

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\*Though some new facts have been added and the general interpretation is somewhat different, the basic material for this chapter has been drawn from the *History of Pittsfield, 1800-1876*, by J. E. A. Smith, and the *History of Pittsfield, 1876-1916*, by Edward Boltwood. Readers desiring greater detail on this period should consult these informative volumes.

of Wahconah Street. Here, in 1855, the Society had acquired some thirty acres as an exhibition ground, erecting many buildings which served the soldiers as barracks.

Later, in August 1862, a camp for western county recruits was established on Elm Street, at Camp Briggs, which subsequently became the Berkshire Pleasure Park. Here the men for the 37th, 49th, 57th, and 61st regiments were trained. For a time the camp was under the command of Major General William F. Bartlett, who later became a resident of the town. He was one of the first in the North to plead the cause of reconciliation with the South, stressing the need of healing old wounds to make a united nation again. The General died in Pittsfield of injuries received during the war.

During the war Pittsfield men fought at Fair Oaks, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Spottsylvania, Cold Harbor, New Orleans, Mobile, Lynchburg, Winchester, and the battles in the Wilderness that brought about Lee's surrender at Appomattox.

While the war was going on, the Ladies' Aid Society under the direction of Mrs. Curtis T. (Parthenia Dickinson) Fenn had raised more than \$10,000 to help meet the needs of local soldiers and their often hard-pressed families. When peace came, Mrs. Fenn initiated a movement to erect a monument to the men of Pittsfield, both living and dead, who had served in the Union armies. On the base of this monument, which stands in Park Square facing West Street, are inscribed the names of the townsmen "who died that the nation might live"—numbering 108, a high proportion for a community of 8,000.

But years passed before the Soldiers' Memorial took shape and substance. In 1871, supplementing about \$3,000 raised by individual contributions, the town government finally appropriated \$7,000 for a "suitable and appropriate soldiers' monument" to be erected in Park Square. Even then there was delay until Park Square could be made worthy to receive the monument.

The Park, frankly, was a mess. Another \$7,000 had to be spent there in making "some long-desired improvements." The



beloved Old Elm was gone, taken down several years before. But the Park was so packed with trees that many had to be felled to let the others have sun and air. For the first time, the Park was graded and trimmed. Already an oval, the grassy Park was rimmed with heavy granite coping and a broad gravel walk; the latter was separated from the dusty streets by a granite curbing. At length, on September 24, 1872, the Soldiers' Memorial was unveiled in a great celebration, attended by the governor of the State and other notables.

Other changes were made around the Square, including the construction of a new Berkshire County Courthouse. For decades Pittsfield had been anxious to become the county seat. Since 1812 it had been arguing the "incontrovertible fact" that the town was the most convenient and "spacious common center for the people of the county of Berkshire to assemble for the transaction of all public business."

But the fact, however incontrovertible, did not much impress the state legislature at Boston for more than a half century—not until 1868, when the legislature decided that the county seat should be removed from Lenox to Pittsfield, provided the latter donated a suitable site for both the courthouse and a county jail.

Three years later, in the fall of 1871, the present courthouse was completed on the corner southeast of the Square. Built of white marble from the Goodale quarry in Sheffield, it was "classical" in design. To make room for the building, the town had bought for \$35,000 the Peace Party House and its grounds, moving the noted House across Wendell Avenue to the opposite corner on East Street, where it has served a variety of purposes down the years.

Another public building soon graced the Square—the present Berkshire Athenaeum, the town's first large library. Social libraries had been established as early as 1796. But there was no general or permanent library until 1850 when the Pittsfield Library Association was founded. Anyone could become a member by buying a share at \$5 and paying an annual fee of \$1. Non-shareholders could use the library for \$2 a year. Inheriting

some of the books of the earlier libraries, the Association bought 800 volumes for \$500 its first year, establishing itself on North Street in a small room open only one evening a week and dimly lighted by a single lantern.

Reflecting the spirit of the times, the Association was very strict about what books went on its shelves. There were to be no "works of fiction in prose"—poetic phantasy seems to have been at least tolerated. Nor were any books on theology to be admitted without the unanimous consent of the directors, who evidently did not wish to get involved in any doctrinal disputes.

The basis of a better and larger library was laid by the generosity of Thomas Allen, Thomas F. Plunkett, and Calvin Martin. For \$8,800 they bought the building next to the courthouse, the small old wooden structure formerly occupied by the Agricultural Bank, and offered it rent-free to the Library Association's successor, the Pittsfield Athenaeum.

The latter soon changed its name to the Berkshire Athenaeum and in 1872 formally incorporated itself "for the purpose of establishing and maintaining in the town of Pittsfield an institution to aid in promoting education, culture, and refinement, and diffusing knowledge by means of a library, reading rooms, lectures, museums, and cabinets of art, and of historical and natural curiosities."

The new Athenaeum immediately fell heir to the few remaining financial assets of the defunct Pittsfield Medical College, as well as to the scientific library and exhibits, which increased its collections somewhat. But the state of the library in the cramped old wooden building left much to be desired, which was a matter of deep concern to several.

Dying in 1872, Phineas Allen II, editor-owner of the *Pittsfield Sun* founded by his father, stipulated in his will that, after the payment of certain legacies and annuities, the remainder of his considerable estate should go to the Athenaeum. The following year, another native son, Thomas Allen, the godfather of the Allen Guard in the Civil War, made the town a very generous offer. This grandson of "Fighting Parson" Allen had made a fortune in the West from quarries and railroad build-



ing. Though he had headquarters and lived most of the year in St. Louis, he built and kept a summer house in Pittsfield, which had him to thank for many benefactions.

Allen offered to build at his own expense, up to \$50,000, a new building for the library if three conditions were met—1) it should be a free public library; 2) ample ground for such a building should be acquired around the site of the old wooden library; 3) some provision should be made to maintain the Athenaeum “in perpetuity.” Quickly agreeing to this, the town spent \$22,400 to enlarge the library site and voted to contribute \$2,000 a year—soon raised to \$3,000—toward the support of the library, to be spent at the discretion of the trustees.

The new Athenaeum opened its doors in 1876. An odd building constructed of blue limestone from Great Barrington, red Longmeadow freestone, and red Missouri granite, it was described at the time as a “much admired specimen of the richer Gothic style.” Others have since pronounced it ugly, a “monstrosity.” In any case, it provided Pittsfield with its first adequate library and museum facilities, and for eighty years now it has served the community as a pleasant, helpful, and stimulating center of intellectual life.

At its opening the library had about 8,000 volumes on its shelves. Some of these were “of choice character,” it was said, “and scarcely any worthless.” Pittsfield had to do with these for some years, till 1880, because there was no money to buy new books. Thereafter, under the direction of the first librarian, Edgar G. Hubbell, and of his successor, Harlan H. Ballard, the Athenaeum steadily increased its collections—books for young and old, pamphlets, documents, local memorabilia, paintings, art objects, and related material.

Valuable private collections were donated to the library—notably, a collection of governmental documents, given by Senator Henry L. Dawes; and 1,000 volumes from the library of that lover of Pittsfield and former summer resident, Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes. The volumes were presented by the renowned doctor-poet’s even more honored son, that true “Yankee from Olympus,” the late great Justice Oliver Wendell

Holmes, as distinguished a member as ever sat on the United States Supreme Court.

Presented to the Athenaeum in 1895, the Holmes library could not even be unpacked, let alone placed on the shelves, for want of space. To relieve its overcrowded condition, the Athenaeum was enlarged in 1897 by building a sizeable extension in the rear, designed by Librarian Ballard, affording room for 70,000 more books.

At this time, too, the Athenaeum amended its charter to give the City official representation in the institution's affairs. As the City contributed largely to its support, the amendment provided—an arrangement still in force—that the mayor, the city treasurer, and the member of the School Committee selected to serve as chairman in the absence of the mayor, serve *ex-officio* as voting members of the corporation's board of trustees.

Even before the Athenaeum was built, still other new buildings had appeared around Park Square. In 1868, Pittsfield's first sizable business block was built by one of the community's larger enterprises, the Berkshire Life Insurance Company. Organized in 1851, the company has steadily expanded, doing business in many states. Considerably enlarged in 1911, the building still stands at North and West streets.

In its earlier years it was the business hub of Pittsfield. Almost everyone had occasion to visit it every few days, for in addition to the Berkshire Life home offices, it housed the post office, the telegraph office, the telephone office, the express office, the gas company office, the quarters of the Masonic organizations, the Park Club, the water commissioners' office, other town offices, and three banks—the Agricultural (1818), the Berkshire County Savings (1846), and the Third National (1881). In this building, in 1878, townspeople smiled as they were carried aloft in Pittsfield's first public elevator, a bit apprehensive but happy to have been spared the effort of the long stairs.

On the north side of Park Square, a new St. Stephen's Episcopal church of red Longmeadow sandstone, still the home of the congregation, was completed in 1890. East of St. Stephen's,



on a large plot enclosed within a stone wall and entered through heavy bronze gates, stood the elaborate stone mansion erected in 1858 by Thomas Allen. It was his summer residence till his death in 1882, and his widow's down to 1897.

One of Pittsfield's showplaces, a prominent feature of the Park Square scene for a half century, the house was torn down in 1913. The spacious grounds, part of the home lot of Parson Allen, were divided up into lots and sold, mostly for business purposes. Two new thoroughfares—Federal Street and Wendell Avenue Extension—were run through the property.

Having long felt the want of adequate facilities for presenting plays, concerts, lectures, and miscellaneous entertainment, Pittsfield acquired its first proper theatre in 1872. Because of the lingering Puritan prejudice against the theatre, it was styled the Academy of Music. A large four-storied brick building with a mansard roof, it stood on the east side of North Street just south of the railroad bridge.

The town took pride in its new "opera house." On the street level was space for six large stores. Above, reached by stairways "of easy ascent," was a "very elegantly finished" theatre seating 1,100 people before a large and well equipped stage. To add to the *éclat*, Pittsfield's first cosmopolitan restaurant, the Palais Royal, established itself in the Academy building, offering the more fashionable and gastronomically adventuresome a taste of what was then regarded as daringly exotic fare.

In 1877 the theatre filled up with a crowd of the curious come to attend a demonstration of a strange new phenomenon—the transmission of sound for long distances over electrified wires. For the occasion wires had been run in from Westfield, some forty-five miles away. An organ pealed at that end of the line, followed by a blast of trumpets. Some in the expectantly hushed audience faintly heard something, which seemed remarkable enough.

But it was generally agreed that, as a practical thing, the ingenious contraption had no future. Within a year, however, a telephone line for business use connected the Pontoosuc mills and the Pittsfield National Bank. The next year Pittsfield had

its first telephone exchange to provide service for its few subscribers whenever they turned the crank on their wall telephones and yelled for "Operator."

Many of the famous players and entertainers of their day appeared at the old Academy down to 1903, when it ceased to be used as a theatre. Earlier that year it inadvertently provided Pittsfield with an unexpected show, all the excitement of a native safari.

One day two lions, part of a trained animal act, escaped in the alley behind the academy and bolted toward North Street, creating pandemonium and general alarm. The wildest rumors circulated as the town sprang to arms. One of the poor frightened beasts was hunted down and killed, the other was captured and returned to its cage, and so ended Pittsfield's first and only lion hunt. As a conversation piece, however, it went on for years.

The 1870s brought hard times to Pittsfield as to the rest of the country, especially after 1873 when a severe depression—a "financial panic"—caused thousands of banks to crash from coast to coast. Business was everywhere bad. Most local mills ran only part time or suspended operations entirely, creating widespread unemployment and serious distress.

Partly as a result of this, a group led by the Reverend Jonathan L. Jenkins of the First Church organized in 1878 the Union for Home Work. It had as its purposes the "relief of the poor, the reform of the bad, the prevention and decrease of pauperism and begging at the door." Though it had a religious character at first, the Union soon gave up doing anything about the "reform of the bad" and concentrated on its non-religious functions—chiefly, how to provide the hungry with bread, how to find jobs for them so that they could support themselves. For four years it acted officially as town almoner in administering "outside relief."

Designed primarily to centralize charitable work in the community, the Union was one of the first organizations of its kind in the country, being a sort of primitive Community Chest. Supported by donations, with volunteers doing much of its



work, the Union aided the needy, helped the sick, and tried to find employment for the "indigent." Expanding its program as time went on, it conducted a sewing school, a cooking school, a boys' club, a day nursery, and similar activities, serving the community well down to 1911, when it ceased to be active as more specialized agencies took over much of its work.

Even before the founding of the Union, another important step had been taken to alleviate human suffering in Pittsfield. In 1874, fourteen women led by Mrs. Thomas F. Plunkett formally organized themselves as a corporation "for the purpose of establishing and maintaining in Pittsfield a House of Mercy for the care of the sick and disabled, whether in indigent circumstances or not."

There was, and had long been, a desperate need for such an institution. The only emergency hospital in town was the old village lockup, the decrepit and dirty police station on School Street, where many had died for want of care and proper facilities.

With money raised among people of all ranks and religious beliefs, a small cottage was rented on Francis Avenue, near Linden Street. Here, on January 1, 1875, the House of Mercy began its long and blessed mission with eight hospital beds, caring for twenty-two patients the first year.

Buying a triangular plot at the intersection of North, Tyler, and First Streets, the organization there erected a new building in 1877—a two-storied wooden structure accommodating thirteen patients—and "what tender prayers rose heavenward on that golden afternoon when, in the slanting sunshine, the cornerstone of the House of Mercy was laid." In 1889, another building was added, the Henry W. Bishop 3rd Memorial Training School, a large brick building which almost doubled the capacity of the hospital.

All during the 1870s when times were so bad, Pittsfield remained alert and hopeful, encouraging new enterprises, adapting its government to meet the town's growing needs. In 1876 it appointed its first chief of police—John M. Hatch, a former constable, who had seven men under his command.

Previously, it had established a Board of Health. The members of the Board, though able and conscientious, accomplished little, wanting support from either the law or public opinion. The need of general sanitary measures was ill understood, and the Board's recommendations were highly unpopular, especially when they involved any expense or seemed to impinge upon the privacy of the home and traditional arrangements there, such as the familiar and fragrant outhouse, garbage disposal, the disposition of slops, or the use of raw milk from a neighbor's barn.

The town improved and enlarged its water system. The Sackett Brook extension, completed in 1876, increased the supply from the Ashley Lake works. A few years later, the dam at the lake was raised to double the capacity of the reservoir, a timely improvement, for the original pipes had been so improperly laid that almost every winter the frost caused scores of serious breaks and leaks in the mains, reducing pressure and leaving many outlying households without water for days at a time.

The town's old educational system with its thirteen independent school districts—each running its own affairs, hiring teachers, setting its own standards—had been officially abandoned in 1869 in favor of a consolidated, townwide school system. Many had bitterly opposed this change and die-hard opposition continued in devious forms, successfully creating great confusion.

When a superintendent was appointed to take charge of all the schools, the dissidents persuaded the town meeting not to pay him a salary, forcing his resignation, so that the change from the old system to the new began without adequate supervision and administration.

Two years later, recognizing the need of some central school control, the town meeting gave way and reversed itself. Under its orders, the School Committee chose one of its members as superintendent, naming Dr. John M. Brewster—poor unhappy man, for he led a harried life for years.



In 1873, the town meeting voted to abolish his salary. It reluctantly reconsidered when the School Committee threatened to resign. The next year, it reduced his salary to \$1,000 a year, cutting it in half. The following year, it restored part of the cut. Then in 1876, reverting to its original stand of seven years before, it voted against paying anything for a superintendent of schools—whereupon Dr. Brewster resigned with a blast against those who had so badgered him.

It was his profound belief, he declared, "that the majority of our citizens earnestly desire that the public schools shall not continue to be made, upon the annual recurrence of town meeting, mere toys and playthings in the hands of educational sceptics and ultra-economists"—sound doctrine at any time.

Pittsfield did not have another superintendent of schools until 1879 when William B. Rice formally took over the position, having performed for four years without pay the major duties of the office as chairman of the School Committee. A man of broad views, lively sympathy, and deep understanding, Rice did much to lay a sound foundation for the development of better education in Pittsfield.

"To assign lessons and hear recitations," he observed in one of his reports, "is barely to touch the outside of the true sphere of the teacher's work . . . It seems to me that many, in discussing the public school question, almost entirely lose sight of the great question—why public schools should exist at all . . . To look upon the public schools as designed merely to fit children to get on in life, is to underestimate the immensely important interests which the public has in their maintenance."

Under Rice and his successors, graded schools supplanted the last of the old ungraded schools where children of widely different ages sat and studied together under a single teacher. School books began to be issued free for the use of pupils in 1878. More and better school houses were built to replace old ones that were fire-traps and disease-breeders. The high school on lower South Street, the former Medical College, burned in 1876—it was a case of arson, perhaps by one of the students—and was replaced at a cost of \$16,000.

This relatively large outlay caused considerable controversy, for many looked askance at the high school. In their opinion it was sufficient to teach children the 3 Rs, as in grandfather's day. They regarded any "higher" education as a frill, a waste of the pupil's time and of the taxpayer's money.

Certainly, most of the town's school children never saw, much less wished to see, the inside of the high school. Only a few boys attended, usually to prepare for college. The small graduating class in 1875, and again in 1878, consisted entirely of girls. Enrollment slowly increased, however. In 1884, average daily attendance exceeded one hundred for the first time. By 1891, Pittsfield had 3,422 pupils attending sixty-three schools, manned—or rather womaned, for the most part—by eighty-six teachers.

During these years, with the return of more prosperous times in the 1880s, the town started to grow more rapidly. The woolen and other textile mills were active again and expanding. New enterprises were set up. Several firms began the manufacture of shoes, a prosperous business for many years, down to the turn of the century. For a time it ranked second only to textiles in Pittsfield's industrial economy. The manufacture of machinery was stepped up by the E. D. Jones and Sons Company, which in 1890 took over the foundries and machine shops of an older company. Other new concerns began to make tacks and clocks. The Terry Clock Company, which operated from 1880 to 1888, appeared as the Apex Electric Clock Company in a very popular and amusing play on Broadway in 1954, "The Solid Gold Cadillac."

A paper mill had been built in 1863 on the Dalton Road near the township line. The mill, the only one of its kind in town, was making paper for paper collars when it was bought in 1879 by Crane and Company of Dalton. This company entirely refitted the mill so that it could make very special paper of the highest quality—"money" paper, for the United States government. Since that time, all Federal "greenbacks" and securities have been printed on paper made under close security regulations here at the "Government Mill," rebuilt after a fire in 1892.



Something really remarkable was being produced in Pittsfield at this time—"Renne's Pain-killing Magic Oil." It made a fortune for its distiller, William Renne, for whom one of the town's streets was named. The oil was certainly magic if the advertisement and directions on the bottle can be credited. Whether used externally or internally, it worked "like a charm" for practically everything, and it was "Clean, Delicious, and Safe to Use."

Used externally, it quickly cured "Rheumatism, Cholera Morbus, Numbness, Stiff and Lame Joints, Sprains, Spinal Difficulties, Sciatica, Bruises, Contusions, Burns, Scalds, Lock-jaw, Rusty Nail Wounds, Bites, and Stings." Its range was almost as great when used internally for "Cramps of the Stomach, Cholic, Pleurisy, Neuralgia, Headache, Colds, Sour Stomach, Kidney Difficulties. Mix with soft water for Sore Eyes, and for Earache . . . Try it for Sore Throat, and for Croup . . . Every family should keep it in the house in case of accident or sudden danger." It is sad to think that it can no longer be had, and that the secret has been lost.

Even an alchemist set up shop in Pittsfield, on Depot Street, installing vats, retorts, and much complicated machinery. He had persuaded a local financier that he had discovered a wondrous secret—how to transmute scrap iron to copper. One day when the alchemist was at lunch, the financial angel decided to see for himself how the mystery was proceeding. Lighting a candle, he anxiously approached a bubbling vat and looked in. There was a blinding explosion, the angel was singed, promptly withdrew his support, and the enterprise collapsed.

Other enterprises almost as magical prospered—the generation and distribution of electricity. Electric light from the new Edison incandescent bulb was first seen in Pittsfield in 1885, when the Robbins' Jewelry store on North Street used a string of such lights as part of its Christmas decorations. Slowly the use of the incandescent light increased, at first in offices and stores, later in the residential districts.

In 1883, the Pittsfield Electric Light Company had been formed to provide current for the few Brush arc lamps then in

use. The town had a score or more of these lights, plus some older gas lamps, to light the main streets. On moonlit nights, they were turned off at midnight, so that prowlers after that hour had to stumble home in the dark as best they could. A rival company entered the field in 1887—the Pittsfield Illuminating Company. The two companies merged in 1890 to become the Pittsfield Electric Company, which built the town's first large central power station at the corner of Eagle Street and Renne Avenue.

On July 3, 1887, the town's first horse car, loaded with be-whiskered notables, made its way slowly along the tracks laid from the railroad station to Pontoosuc Lake.

"Roll on, thou gorgeous Car of Progress, roll!" exclaimed the *Sun* with mock heroics. "Paw, steed! Tinkle the signal bell! . . . We hope that every trip will have loads like the first, but with more money in them."

Local transit companies ever since have perennially wished that there was "more money in them," complaining constantly of running only in the red, while their customers complain that they scarcely run at all.

Within a few years, by 1891, electric street cars with overhead trolleys were running from Park Square to Pontoosuc Lake—when they got that far. Many times they failed to make the challenging grade at Benedict Hill. Horse cars were not immediately abandoned, for the impression remained that electric trolleys might not do so well in the hilly Berkshires. Even so, local trolley lines increased in number and were extended to Dalton, Hinsdale, and other towns.

Pittsfield was becoming a sizable city, with a population climbing toward 20,000. But it was still formally and legally a town, governed by the old town meeting system set up more than 125 years before, in 1761, when the population numbered little more than two hundred. In such a small community the annual town meeting, at which every eligible voter could personally have his say and vote by voice on all questions and candidates presented, was a fine instrument of responsive democratic government. It was a neighborly and efficient arrange-



ment. But it did not begin to meet the needs of a community grown almost a hundred times as large.

Consequently, on February 11, 1890, Pittsfield voted to incorporate itself as a city. The margin in favor of the new charter was very narrow—only 146 votes—for many wished to cling to the old pattern under which a board of three selectmen was chosen at the annual town meeting to direct public affairs, dividing up the work among themselves.

Under the new charter, executive responsibilities were concentrated in a mayor, to be elected annually. Two legislative bodies were created, a Common Council and a Board of Aldermen. These were to check on one another, and on the mayor, with the result that all three were frequently at loggerheads, paralyzing action for long periods—a fault belatedly corrected more than forty years later by charter revision. The Board of Aldermen consisted of seven members, one elected from each ward. The Common Council was twice as large, having two members from each ward. The voters also elected the members of the School Committee, two from each ward.

Pittsfield had consistently voted Democratic in national affairs since 1876 and, as its first mayor, chose a member of that party, Charles E. Hibbard, a distinguished lawyer and district attorney. The Republicans, however, controlled the joint sessions of the Aldermen and the Council by a majority of one. The new regime took office with fitting ceremony at the Academy of Music on January 5, 1891.

"This ancient town is passing away," observed the chairman of the meeting, Judge Joseph Tucker, one of the older citizens. "Sorrowfully, we await its last moments. When they come, let us cry with loud acclaim, long live the City of Pittsfield." People celebrated the event at a large inaugural ball that happily blended the old and the new. The gay company alternately danced the traditional village square dances and the fashionable "new" waltz and polka just coming into vogue.

A milestone had been passed, and a new era was opening. Modern Pittsfield was born at this time and began to grow very rapidly. Becoming a city in fact rather than just a large town, it

almost doubled its population within twenty years, due less to the new frame of government than to a largely fortuitous development that has decisively shaped the community to this day.

It so happened that a man of genius, William Stanley, inventor of the transformer, essential for the transmission of alternating electric current, was living and working in the Berkshires—at Great Barrington. There, in 1886, he gave that town the world's first commercial electric lighting system run by alternating current. Earlier systems used direct current, which had many disadvantages. Today, almost all electric power systems in the world use alternating current, thanks to the Stanley transformer.

Stanley and his friend Cummings C. Chesney worked for a time with the Westinghouse Company. When it went into receivership in 1890, both men were left without jobs or money. What happened next was told to the local Stanley Club many years later by Chesney, by then a long-time resident of Pittsfield.

"Well, what are we going to do now?" Stanley asked Chesney. "I'll tell you. Let's find a factory to manufacture transformers. They're going to be the heart of the electrical transmission system. You look up a factory, Chesney, and I'll do the same."

The two men separated and after several weeks of looking about, were together again in Great Barrington.

"Did you find a factory?" asked Stanley.

"Yes, in New Jersey."

"Did you get any money?"

"No," said Chesney, "never knew we had to have any."

"Well," Stanley announced, "I got some—and a factory, too—among friends of mine in Pittsfield. That's where we'll go." And go they did in November 1890.

Stanley was known to many in Pittsfield as a stockholder and officer in the Pittsfield Illuminating Company, and a number of his friends—notably, Charles Atwater, William R. Plunkett, Charles E. Hibbard, William A. Whittlesey, and William W. Gamwell—joined him in organizing the Stanley Electric Manu-



facturing Company, capitalized at \$25,000. Atwater was its first president, being soon succeeded by Gamwell.

With Chesney as works' engineer, the company began operations in a small shop on Clapp Avenue, employing sixteen men in making transformers, generators, and other electrical apparatus. It is not too much to say that modern Pittsfield was born in this small shop, for the transformer built the modern city. Stanley and Chesney were soon joined by another engineer, John F. Kelly, to form a remarkable combination. "Stanley was the genius," it was said, "Kelly, the great consulting engineer; and Chesney, the man to get things done."

With the infant and fast-growing electric power industry clamoring for transformers and other equipment, the success of the enterprise was phenomenal from the start. It soon moved to much larger quarters on Renne Avenue, where three hundred were employed in making products bearing the label of the "SKC System"—from the initials of Stanley, Kelly, and Chesney. SKC equipment quickly gained a national and international market.

Earnings ran high, as much as fifty per cent a year on invested capital. The original capitalization of \$25,000 was increased to \$50,000 in 1891; to \$100,000 in 1892; to \$200,000 in 1893; to \$300,000 in 1895; to \$500,000 in 1896. This was all the more remarkable, for the country had fallen into a period of severe depression in 1893.

In 1899, control of the company passed into the hands of John A. Roebling Sons, of Trenton, New Jersey. The latter increased its capitalization to \$2,000,000 and began building a large factory in the Morningside section. In 1901, in its first year of operation, this factory had some 1,200 men at work making transformers, electric irons, electric fans, small motors, and other electric equipment worth approximately \$1,000,000.

Two years later, in 1903, the General Electric Company, with headquarters in Schenectady, New York, bought the company and its plant. The latter continued to operate under the Stanley name down to 1907 when it was formally absorbed into the General Electric structure. With the consolidation here of all

General Electric transformer manufacture, some of which had previously been carried on in Schenectady and at West Lynn, Massachusetts, the local plant became one of the company's larger operating units and continued to expand from year to year.

At the outbreak of World War I in 1914, its twenty-two factories, with an equal number of auxiliary buildings, covered many acres in the Morningside section along the Boston and Albany railroad tracks. Working at capacity, the plant employed some 6,000 people, about a sixth of the city's population. The General Electric payroll provided by far the largest source of Pittsfield's income.

Other new enterprises had been established in Pittsfield since 1890. What is now the Eaton Paper Corporation, makers of fine stationery and writing accessories, came to the city in 1893 as the Hurlbut Stationery Company, establishing itself on South Church Street in the factory once occupied by the Terry Clock Company. Later the Eaton-Hurlbut Company, reorganized in 1907 as the Eaton, Crane, and Pike Company, with Arthur W. Eaton as president, it steadily enlarged its plant until it employed a thousand or more when working at capacity.

A large brewery was built in 1890 by the Berkshire Brewing Company, organized by Jacob Gimlich and John A. White. This brewery, the only one of size within miles, produced 75,000 barrels of beer a year and prospered down to Prohibition. Other shorter-lived enterprises tried without financial success to make trucks, the Stilson motor car, automobile parts, electric player pianos, shirts, overalls, knitted goods, weaving shuttles, and voting machines.

Agriculture, the region's main support down to the Civil War, continued its steady decline in Pittsfield, and throughout the Berkshires, as richer virgin lands in the West were opened up.

Since 1812, Pittsfield's big event of the year had been the annual three-day cattle show and fair of the Berkshire Agricultural Society. But it had sharply changed in character, becoming less a country fair than a commercial carnival. Not wishing



to be "in the circus business," the old Society decided to dissolve in 1902, selling its large fair grounds on Wahconah Street.

Some of the older companies making woollens and other textiles had fallen by the wayside—the D. and H. Stearns Company, the Pomeroy Woolen Company, the J. L. and T. D. Peck Manufacturing Company, and the firm of J. Barker and Brothers with factories southwest of town, at Barkerville. But other older mills were active—those of Pontoosuc Woolen, of the S. H. and C. Russell Manufacturing Company, of Wilson and Horton. Several new large companies were formed—the W. E. Tillotson Manufacturing Company, and the Berkshire Woolen, organized in 1910 and still prospering from the busy looms in its mills along Onota Brook.

The rapid growth of industry and population stimulated the banks, enlarging the old ones and creating new ones. In 1876 Pittsfield had only two national banks, the Agricultural National and the Pittsfield National, with aggregate deposits of less than \$700,000.

In 1881, the Third National was established; in 1889, the Pittsfield Co-operative Bank; in 1893, the City Savings; in 1895, the Berkshire Loan and Trust Company; in 1911, the Union Co-operative Bank.

The older banks sought larger quarters. In 1895, the Berkshire County Savings Bank moved its offices from the Berkshire Life Insurance building, erecting the six-storied building that stands at North Street and the Park. For a time, this building housed the offices of the Berkshire Mutual Fire Insurance Company, which had been steadily building up its business since its founding in 1835.

Starting in a small cubicle in a store on North Street, the City Savings Bank bought a business block at the corner of North and Fenn streets in 1906, and two years later moved into the ample quarters it has since occupied there.

Another bank, the Agricultural National, Pittsfield's oldest and largest, moved from its long-time quarters in the Berkshire Life Insurance building to the east side—up to then, the

“wrong” side—of North Street, where it built in 1909 the white marble structure that it still occupies.

As better rail travel and the increasing use of the automobile brought more and more vacationers to the Berkshires, to stay awhile or merely to pass through as sightseers, “summer business” became an important part in Pittsfield’s economy.

The old Maplewood Institute, a private school for girls since 1827, had to close its doors and, in 1887, became a summer hotel which remained Pittsfield’s most fashionable for decades. What is still the city’s largest and best appointed hotel, the Wendell, long a landmark on the Square, opened its doors in 1898 at the corner of West and South streets. Later, a large wing was added along South Street, doubling its accommodations.

Since 1892, Pittsfield had had two daily newspapers—the now deceased *Evening Journal*, founded in 1880, and the *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, born of the *Berkshire County Eagle*, a weekly that traced its ancestry back to 1827. Beginning as the *Argus* of Pittsfield, it became the *Journal and Argus* of Lenox, then the *Massachusetts Eagle*. Moving back to Pittsfield in 1842, it became the *Berkshire County Eagle* ten years later.

It led a checkered career down to 1891 when the paper was acquired by a group headed by Kelton B. Miller of Pittsfield. Staunchly Republican in politics for many years, the *Eagle* issued its first daily edition on May 9, 1892, made up of four large pages; 2,000 copies were sold. By 1915, its regular edition contained eighteen pages covering the news of the world—local, county, state, national, and international. Since 1918, when the *Daily News* ceased publication, the *Eagle* has been Pittsfield’s only daily newspaper, and with the exception of a small Italian weekly, *Il Corriere del Berkshire*, its only paper.

A casualty of these years was one of Pittsfield’s oldest institutions, the venerable *Pittsfield Sun*. After 106 years of publication, consistently Democratic to the last, the *Sun* expired on September 27, 1906, eleven days after the death of its last editor, James Harding, who had labored for twenty-seven years



to keep the old weekly alive. The Sun Printing Company continued in business and is still doing job printing.

A bustling city by 1915, Pittsfield had come far from the rural and somewhat isolated town it had been as late as the Civil War. It had been snatched up by "progress" and tied into the country's increasingly complex economic and social structure. Its population now reached almost 40,000, having doubled in twenty years. Its larger industries were prospering. Many new small businesses and any number of shops and stores were being opened. One would have said, looking just at Pittsfield, that sunny years were ahead.

But the world was in crisis. World War I had broken out in the summer of 1914. Fighting was raging over most of Europe, and on more distant battlefronts. But the trouble seemed far away and not likely to involve us. President Wilson had officially proclaimed this country's neutrality, virtually telling the belligerents, "a plague on both your houses."

Though there were some exceptions, Americans in general shared this view. They were not interested in Europe's age-old quarrels. They did not wish to be disturbed in their familiar ways and routines.

"Don't talk war—talk business!" was more than a phrase of the day. It was almost a command.

As the year 1915 drew to a close, business-as-usual was the order of the day in Pittsfield. The city could not foresee the tangle of events already shaping up. It little realized that within a few months many of its sons would be in uniform, that not many months later they would be fighting in the trenches in Europe, a number of them to lay down their lives on foreign soil in what was styled "a war to make the world safe for democracy."

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*The following section summarizes more important developments in various fields from 1890 to 1916.*

#### *General Facilities*

Though it brought its advantages, Pittsfield's rapid growth brought its problems and tensions, too, straining all local

facilities—housing, schools, hospitals, water supply, fire and police protection, to cite a few. The residential area began to fan out, especially north of Tyler Street and out Elm and other streets to the southeast. More office buildings and stores were built, principally along North Street, which was then, as now, Pittsfield's "Main Street."

### *Schools*

The rapid tempo of Pittsfield's growth put a heavy strain on the schools. Three new schoolhouses were built in 1896. Seven more were added by 1915. Unluckily for the taxpayers, fire entirely destroyed the high school building on lower South Street in 1895. All that was salvaged was a piano, a chair, and a teacher's desk. A new high school, built between Second Street and the Common, cost \$170,000. Its predecessor, built twenty years before, had cost \$16,000.

The first city council in 1891 appropriated \$54,000 to run the schools that year. In 1915, the school bill totalled \$252,000. For 1954, it exceeded \$2,000,000, which is some measure of the physical growth of the schools and the steadily increasing educational opportunities they offer at all levels, down to kindergartens, which became part of the school system in 1902, after years of debate.

Another important institution providing education for Pittsfield youth was founded in 1897 when the Sisters of St. Joseph opened an academy in the convent on North Street. Two years later they built St. Joseph's Parochial School on North Pearl Street. By 1915, almost seven hundred pupils were attending St. Joseph's.

### *Museum*

For 27 years after its construction in 1876, the Berkshire Athenaeum served as both a library and a museum. Limitations of space prevented proper exhibition of its many collections of paintings, art objects, minerals, Indian relics, and the like.

In 1903, through the benevolence of Zenas Crane of Dalton, a fine new museum building, Italian Renaissance in design, was



opened on South Street, near Park Square, with Harlan H. Ballard, librarian of the Athenaeum, as first curator. Giving the Athenaeum much needed space for more books, the paintings and other collections there were removed to the new Museum of Natural History and Art, which was soon enlarged, thanks again to the generosity of Zenas Crane.

A south wing was added in 1905, a north wing in 1910, and in 1915 a large addition was built connecting the two wings, completing the quadrilateral. Meantime, Crane and other benefactors had been building up the Museum's collections of art, science, and local history.

### *Parks and Playgrounds*

The foundation of Pittsfield's public playground system was laid in 1911 when a committee of citizens incorporated the Park and Playground Association. Supported by public subscription and with some slight aid from the city, the Association bought land and established well-equipped and expertly-supervised playgrounds for youngsters on the Common, on Columbus Avenue, at Springside, near Pontoosuc Lake, and at the Russell factory village. In 1915 the municipality purchased all of the Association's land and took over the playgrounds, though for a time they still had to be supported in part by public subscription.

In 1913, a commission of five members appointed by the mayor took charge of Pittsfield's parks, soon increasing them by purchasing ten acres of woodland on the south shore of Pontoosuc Lake. Previously, the Common had been equipped with a playground and provided with walks, benches, shade trees, and the bandstand that had stood for some years on a triangular plot in front of the Athenaeum. Seventy-six acres were added to Burbank Park along Onota Lake.

Land for Springside Park was given to the city in 1910 and 1912 by Kelton B. Miller, publisher of *The Berkshire Evening Eagle*. It was Miller who took the lead in organizing the Balance Rock Trust in 1910. This organization of twenty-six public-spirited citizens purchased a wooded tract in Lanesborough in

order "to preserve Balance Rock and the land in connection therewith . . . as a place for the study of and experiments in forestry, and as a resort for sightseers and students of nature, and for other public purposes." Known as Rolling Rock in earlier days, the curious boulder and the land around it were presented to the city as a public park in 1916.

### *Hospitals*

Hospital and related facilities had to be greatly enlarged to meet the city's needs. A new House of Mercy was built in 1902, across from its old site on North Street. Another hospital, the Hillcrest Surgical, opened in 1908 at Springside Avenue and North Street. Organized in 1908, the Pittsfield Visiting Nurse Association provided invaluable aid for those "otherwise unable to secure assistance in time of illness," besides teaching cleanliness and proper care of the sick.

Through funds donated by Dr. Frederick Shurtleff Coolidge and his wife, Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, founder of the famed South Mountain Chamber Music festival, the Pittsfield Anti-tuberculosis Association established in 1912 a sanatorium southwest of the city, near Lebanon Avenue, buying for the purpose a large farmhouse with many acres of ground. Later, in 1915, with funds left by the will of Dr. Coolidge, who had died of tuberculosis, construction began on the Frederick Shurtleff Coolidge Memorial Hospital. Built near the farmhouse, Mrs. Coolidge gave it an endowment of \$100,000. Situated on fifty-three acres of ground, the two hospitals could care for thirty patients.

### *Water Supply*

Water supply for the expanding city posed a serious and continuing problem. Older reservoirs were enlarged. A new small reservoir on Mill Brook, in Lenox, was built in 1896, and another on Roaring Brook, in Lenox and Washington. In 1909, after two years of drought, the waters of Onota Lake had to be pumped into the mains which were being extended in all directions. A major source of new supply became available



in 1912 with completion of the Farnham dam and reservoir at a cost of almost \$800,000.

### *Fire Protection*

Up to 1892 the fire department had consisted of four volunteer companies. The new city charter changed this, putting fire-fighting on a regular paid basis. By 1905, the fire department had fourteen men on regular duty and a "call force" of fifty. By 1915, the force had been increased to thirty-five firemen and a call force of eighteen.

The present central fire station at the head of School Street was built in 1895. A brick station on Tyler Street in the Morningside area was added in 1906, and the old wooden fire station in West Pittsfield was enlarged in 1914. Constantly augmenting its equipment, the department bought its first automobile fire truck in 1911. By 1916 the entire department was motorized, which gave citizens a far greater sense of security against the ravages of fire.

### *Police*

In 1891, Pittsfield had a small police force of only fourteen men, with headquarters in the old village lockup on School Street. Adequate for an earlier day, it was soon bulging with involuntary guests as the population increased. As early as 1900 it was pronounced a "disgrace," but nothing was done to replace it for decades.

Pittsfield saw its first "Black Maria" in 1903 when a one-horse patrol wagon began to provide culprits and suspects the comfort of a "ride" to the station. Previously, they had had to propel themselves toward incarceration. The patrol wagon, it appears, was not called out any oftener than in other communities of like size—indeed, less often, for Pittsfield's law-abiding record has been good.

By 1915, the force numbered thirty-nine—a captain, an inspector, a sergeant, a matron, two drivers and thirty-three patrolmen, who worked 12-hour shifts six days a week. The department was under the command of Chief of Police John L.

Sullivan, who took office that year at a salary of \$1,200 annually, soon raised to \$1,800. Sullivan headed the department for more than thirty years, down to his retirement in 1947. A large man with a fine presence, given to speaking his mind freely and forcefully in his own distinctive idiom, Sullivan was one of Pittsfield's more colorful personalities in recent times, as will appear.

### *Churches*

Down the years, especially after the founding of the Stanley works and their expansion by General Electric, a marked change had occurred in the composition of Pittsfield's population, and in the ratio between the native and foreign born. In the beginning and for a century thereafter, most of the people in Pittsfield were Protestant and of Yankee stock. In the 1840s, with the coming of the railroad, some Irish settled in the town and soon became "old families." Later, especially after 1890, came many people of other descent to work in the growing factories—Italians, Poles, and French Canadians, among the larger groups. Almost all of these were Catholic by tradition and personal belief.

### *Catholic*

Catholic services had been held in Pittsfield as early as 1835 when visiting priests came occasionally to hold meetings and administer the rites in private homes. By 1844 there were enough of the faith to build a small wooden church on Melville Street.

The growth of the congregation was slow, however. Twenty years passed before, in 1864, work began on St. Joseph's, the large Gothic stone church still in use on North Street. Many difficulties, chiefly want of funds, delayed construction. But the building was finally completed in 1889, largely through the untiring energy of the pastor, the Reverend Edward H. Purcell.

Born in Donoughmore, Ireland, Father Purcell came to Pittsfield in 1854 and devotedly served the parish for almost forty years, till his death in 1891. Under his successors the Sis-



ters of St. Joseph built, just south of the church, a convent in which they opened a small academy, the beginning of the new extensive St. Joseph's Parochial schools.

The number of worshippers at St. Joseph's soon stretched the capacity of the church, large as it was. The parish was divided in 1893 and a new one created, St. Charles, which in 1894 built a brick church in the northwestern part of the city, on Briggs Avenue. Another division of the parish occurred in 1913 when St. Mark's chapel, a temporary structure, was built on West Street, at Onota. Still another division occurred in 1915 when the parish of St. Mary was set off in the Morningside district where a church was built at the corner of Tyler and Plunkett streets.

French Roman Catholics in Pittsfield, having long worshipped in the original St. Joseph's on Melville Street, tore down that old wooden structure in 1895 and on the site erected a spacious Romanesque brick church, Notre Dame de Bon Conseil.

### *Protestant*

New churches of various denominations appeared. The Pilgrim Memorial Church, the outgrowth of a Sunday School established by the First Church in a school house on Peck's Road, was organized in 1897 and built a stone church on the west side of Wahconah Street. A Sunday school mission established by the First Baptist church at Morningside became in 1896 the Morningside Baptist Church. In 1913, it built a large brick church on Tyler Street, at Grove. An Episcopalian mission at Morningside developed in 1909 into St. Martin's Church on Woodlawn Avenue. Another church appeared in Morningside in 1914 when the Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church was organized, the parish worshipping in a wooden chapel on Tyler Street.

The Unitarian Church, the first in Berkshire County, was organized in 1887, having as its first pastor the Reverend W. W. Fenn, later dean of the Harvard Divinity School. Having built a house of worship on North Street in 1890, the Unity

Church moved in 1912 to a large home on Linden Street. The Protestant German Evangelical Church, formed in 1859, became in 1892 Zion's Evangelical Lutheran Church and soon built a new brick church on First Street.

The Second Adventist Christian Church began holding meetings in rooms on Park Square in 1888, building a church on Fenn Street two years later. Organized in 1905 with twenty-two members, the First Church of Christ, Scientist, met in a hall on North Street until 1907 when it bought a residence on South Street for use as a church and a reading room.

### *Jewish*

The heads of several Jewish families, largely from Germany, organized in 1869 the local Society Anshe Amonim (Men of Faith). They held their meetings at the houses of members for many years, establishing themselves after 1900 in rooms on North Street.

Another Jewish congregation, Knesses Israel (Gathering of Israel) was formed in 1893. It met on Robbins Avenue until 1908 when it built a synagogue on Linden Street. A third Jewish congregation, Ahavath Sholom (Love of Peace), organized in 1911, built a synagogue on Dewey Avenue.

### *Clubs and Organizations*

With the expansion of the city came a growth of clubs and organizations of many kinds—social, educational, religious, fraternal, recreational, and patriotic.

A local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution was founded in 1896; of the Sons of the American Revolution, in 1897. Though declining in numbers as death claimed their members, the Rockwell and Berkshire posts of the Grand Army of the Republic were still active. The veterans of the Spanish-American War of 1898 formed an organization, though few from Pittsfield had seen active service during that war.

With more facilities needed for the city's youth, the Pittsfield Young Men's Christian Association completed in 1910 a large four-storied brick building, its present quarters, on North



Street at the corner of Melville. A Catholic organization, the Father Mathew Total Abstinence Society, dating back to 1877, provided greatly enlarged social and recreational facilities for its 800 members by building on Melville Street in 1913 a three-storied brick structure with a large gymnasium. The Working Girls' Club (1890), the Business Women's Club (1909), the Young Women's Home Association (1910), and the Girls' League (1913) were brought together in new quarters on Bank Row in 1915.

Pittsfield's outstanding Boys' Club was organized in 1900, soon having 600 members. It directed its program chiefly toward vocational training. A few years later, Zenas Crane, of Dalton, offered to give the club a building, with funds to maintain it, if Dalton boys were allowed the privilege of membership, an offer that was quickly and gratefully accepted.

Erected on Melville Street, opened in 1906 and still in use, the building contained eight classrooms, a large auditorium, a library, bowling alleys, and recreation rooms. Later, in 1910, again through the generosity of Crane, a large gymnasium and other facilities were added at the back of the building. In 1915, the club had 1,600 members, being a lively and fruitful center of community youth life.

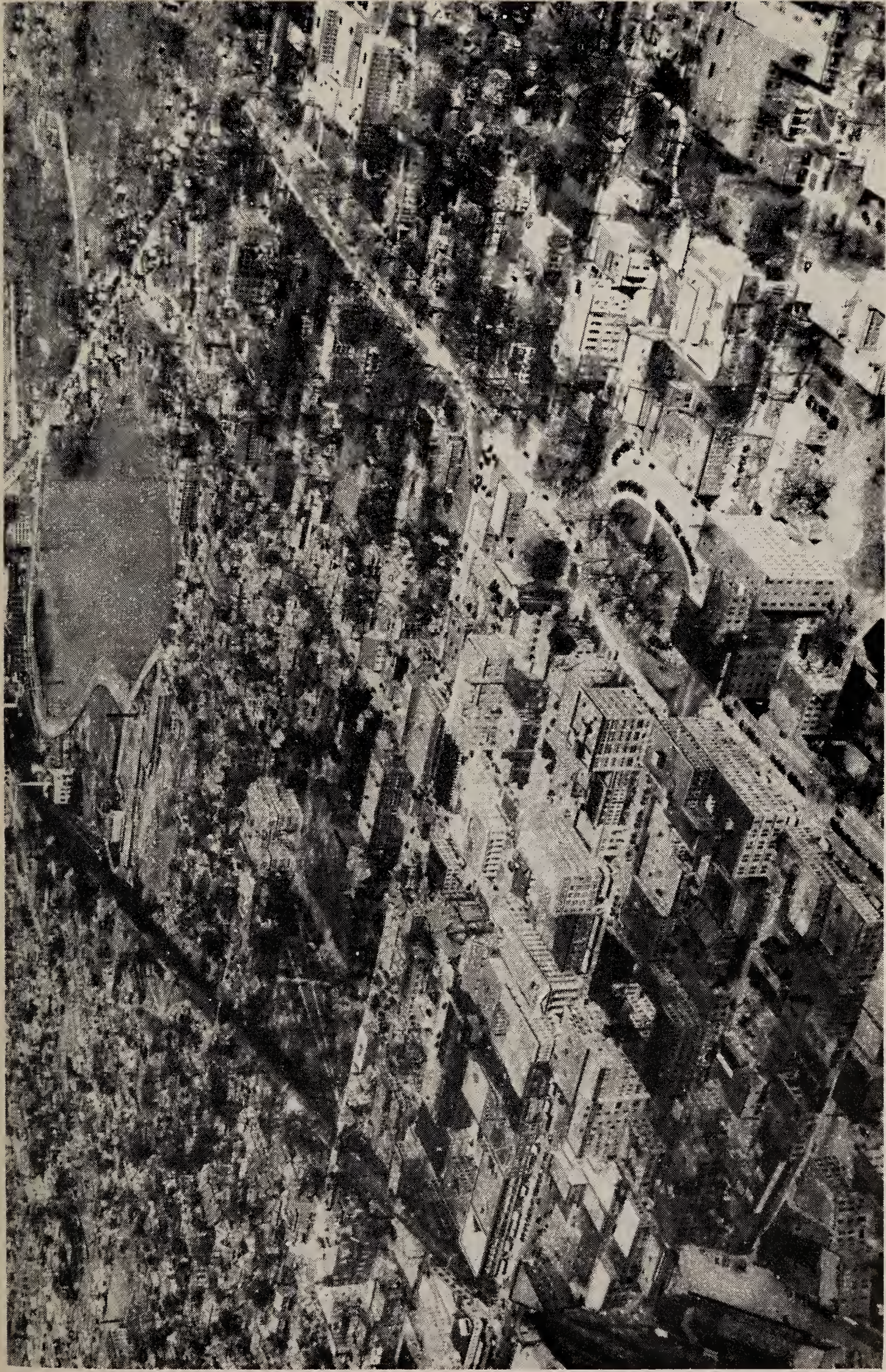
On the more social side there was likewise expansion and proliferation. The Pittsfield Country Club established itself on lower South Street in 1899, buying Broadhall, the historic mansion built in 1781 by Henry Van Schaack, later the home of Elkanah Watson and Thomas Melville, still later a summer boarding house at which Longfellow, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville had stayed. On the ample grounds around the old mansion, which was remodeled and subsequently enlarged, the country club laid out a golf course, tennis courts, a baseball diamond, and other playgrounds for its members.

As the new game of whacking a little white pellet into and out of the rough became more popular, the club extended its golf course from nine to eighteen holes. It had long had a very popular "nineteenth hole."

Descended from the intrepid Berkshire County Wheelmen of the 1880s, the Pittsfield Bicycle Club still met regularly at its club rooms on North Street. The Pittsfield Boat Club enlarged its quarters at Point of Pines on Pontoosuc Lake. A Masonic Temple was built on South Street in 1912. In the same year the Elks constructed a clubhouse on Union Street. The Eagles built theirs on First Street in 1915.

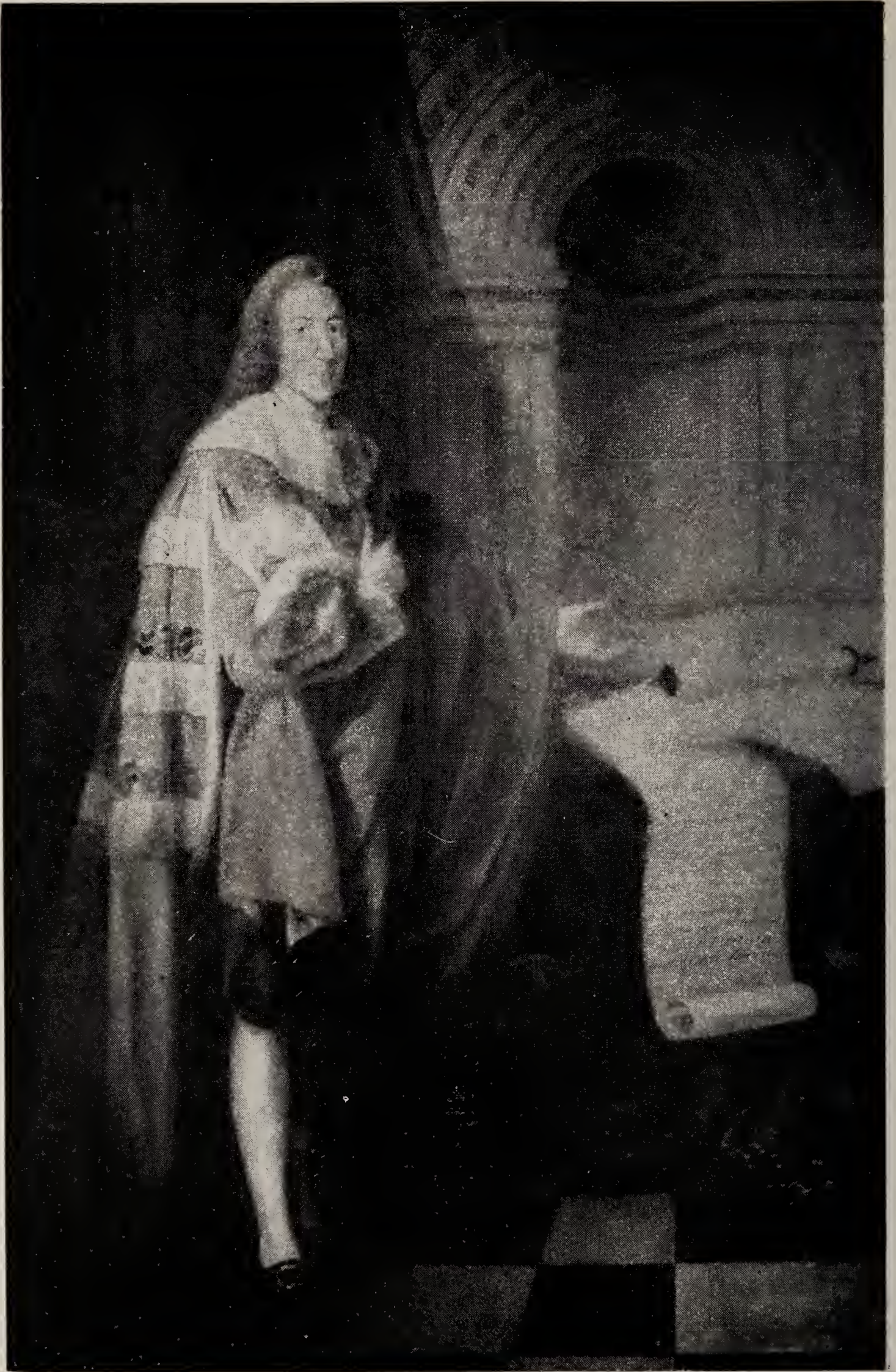
For men of a more literary and philosophic turn of mind, there was the Monday Evening Club, founded in 1869, and for the women the Wednesday Morning Club, founded ten years later. The Wednesday Morning Club was so called, it was said, because it never met on Wednesday mornings.





Present-day Pittsfield from the air





*Berkshire Athenaeum*

William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, 1708-1778, for whom Pittsfield is named

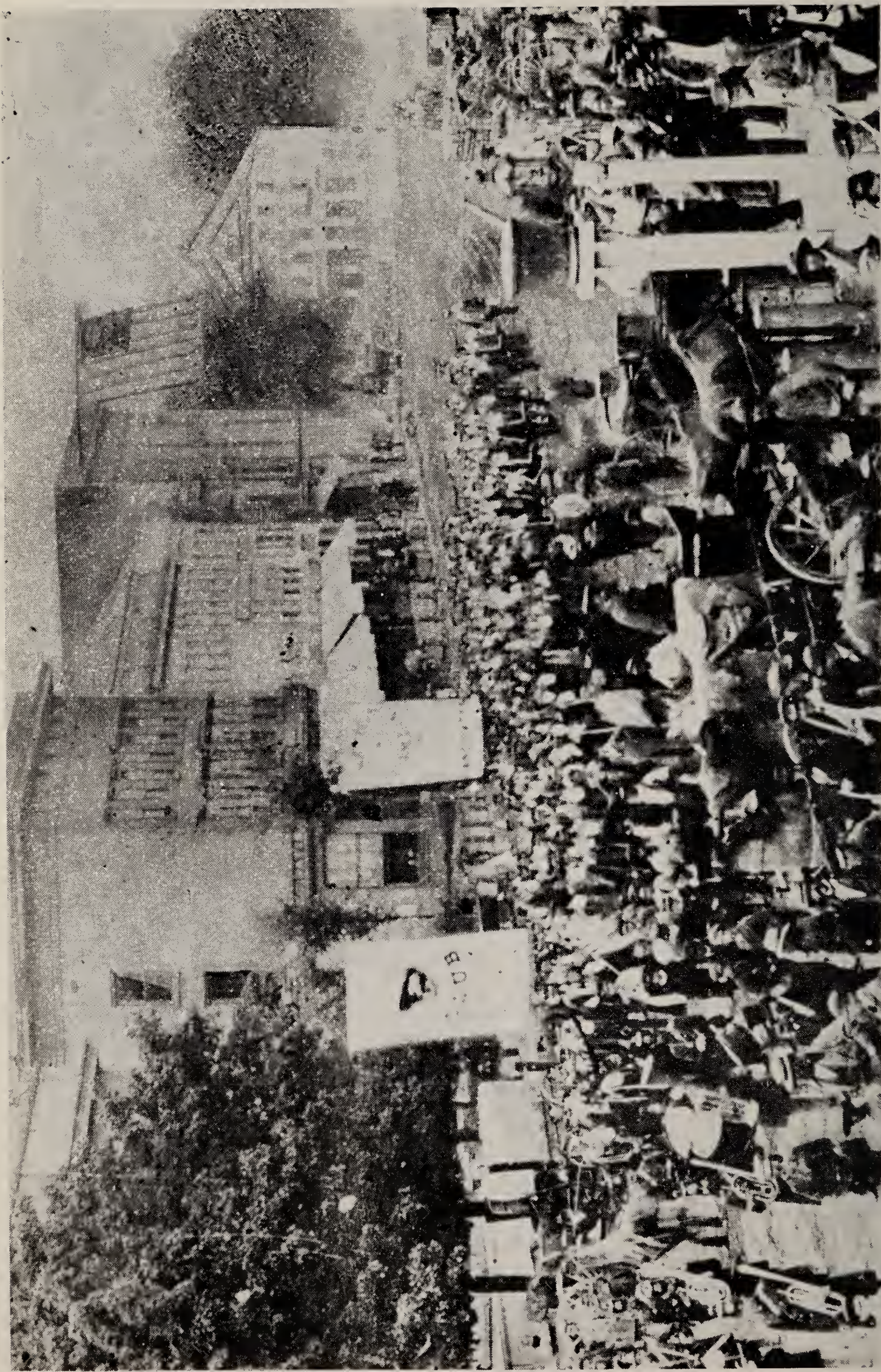




*Berkshire Athenaeum*

Park Square in 1830

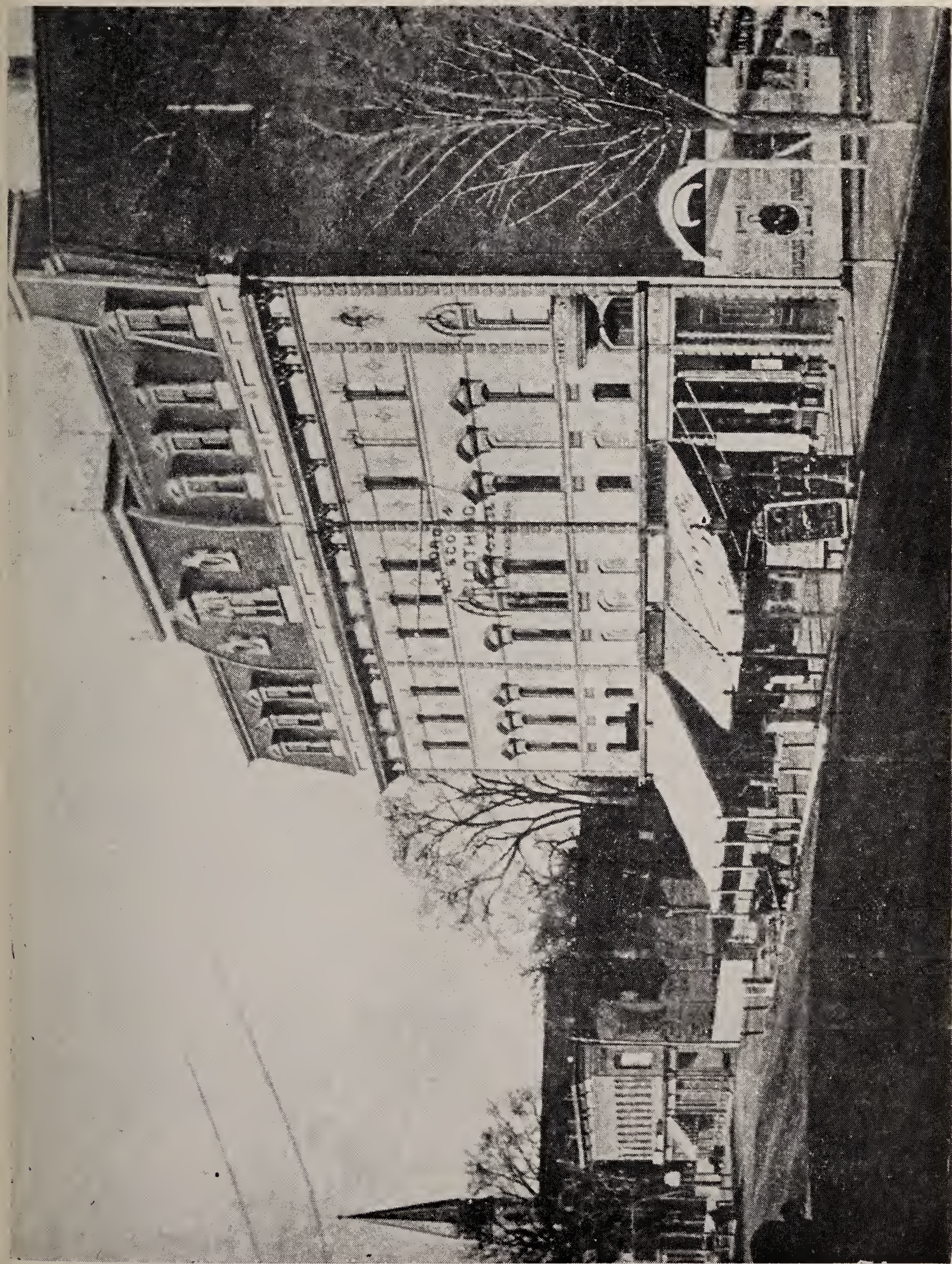




Buel

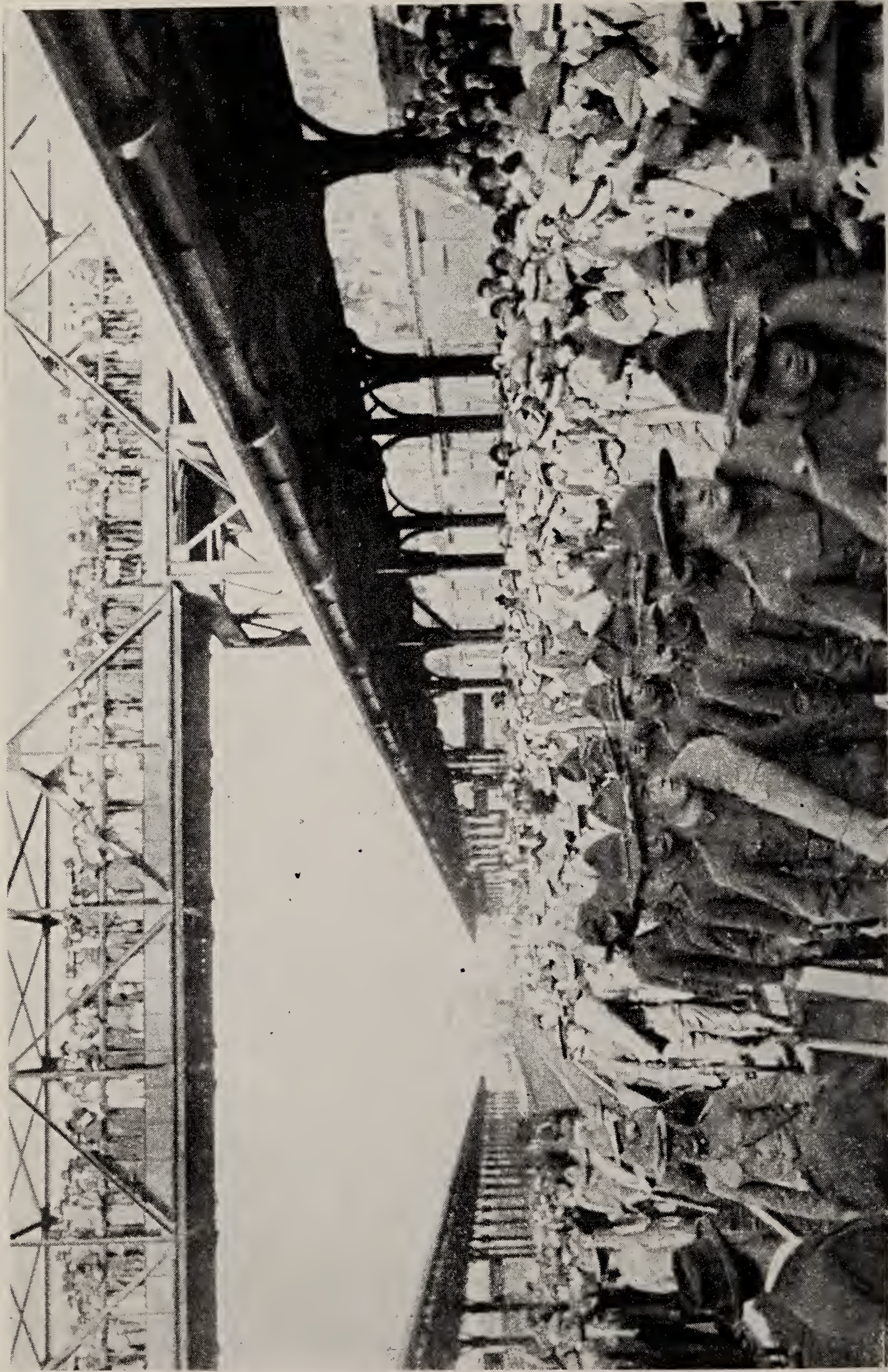
The "Wide-Awakes" stage a Lincoln rally on North Street, 1860





The Academy of Music, 1873

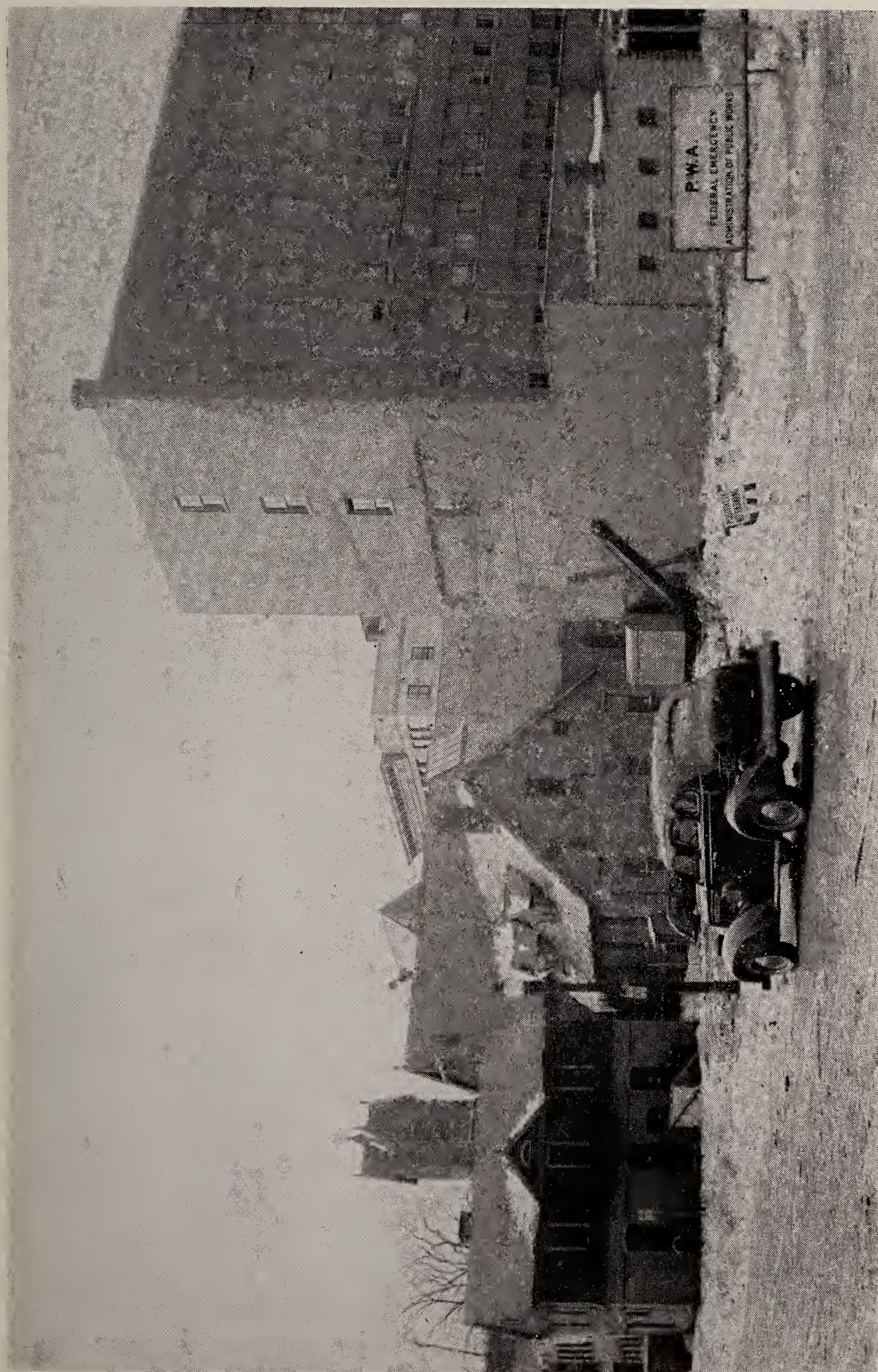




*Berkshire Eagle*

World War I—Company F leaves for camp, 1917

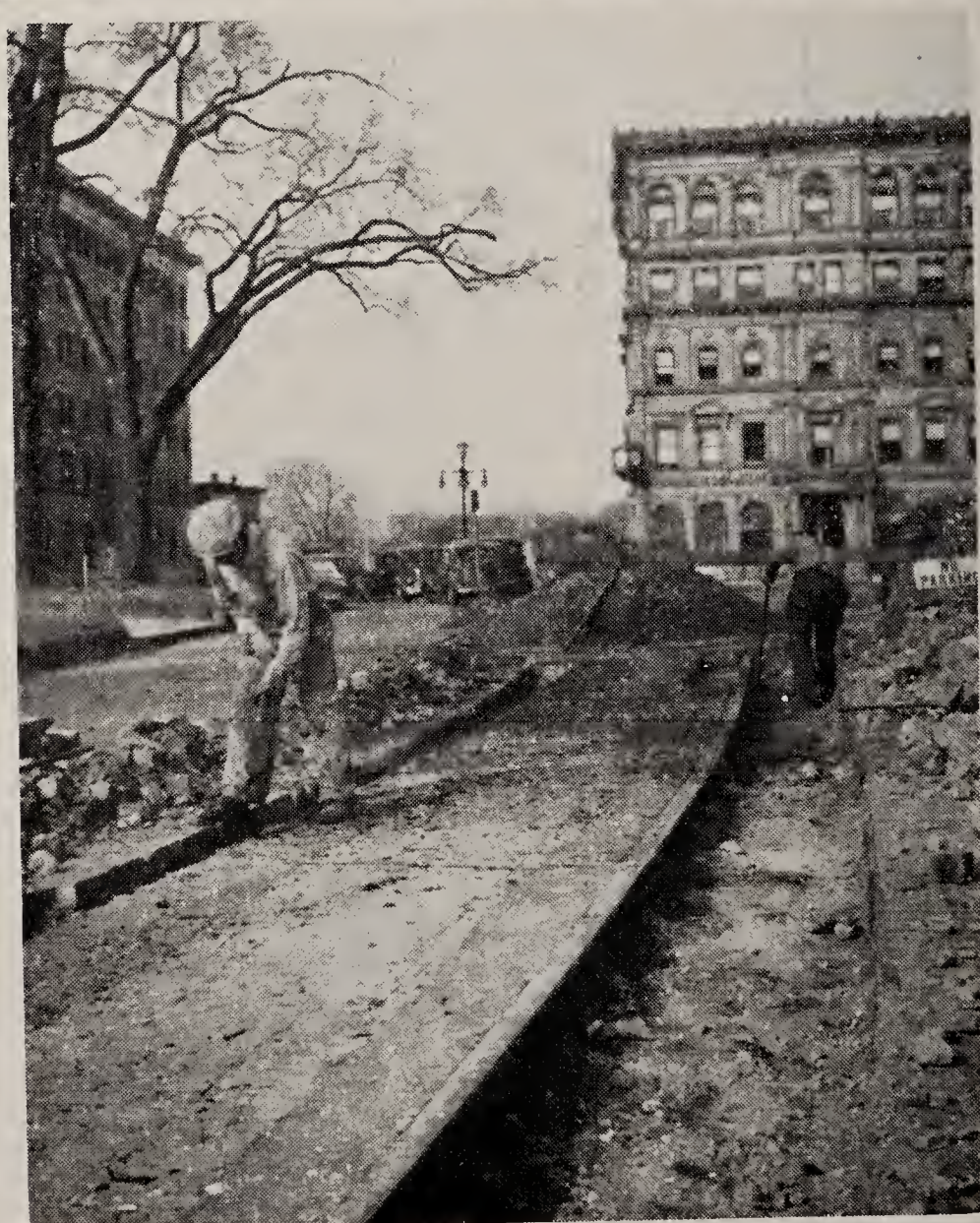




*Berkshire Eagle*

The Depression—PWA clears ground for the new municipal building, winter of 1938





*Berkshire Eagle*

Trolley tracks at Park Square—Laying them down (1901)  
and picking them up (1942)

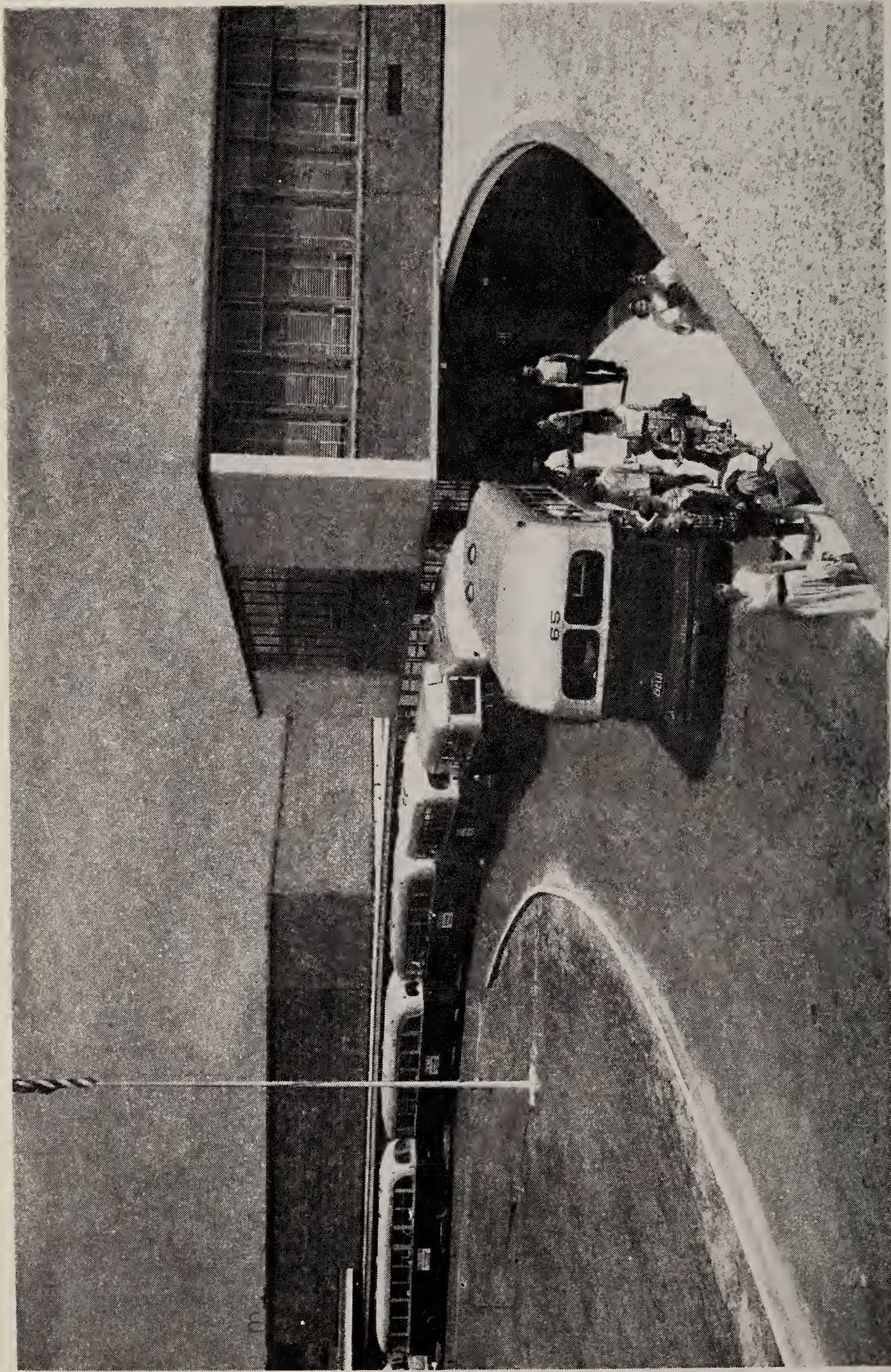




*Berkshire Eagle—Plouffe*

World War II—A tired band plays on after the victory parade, 1945

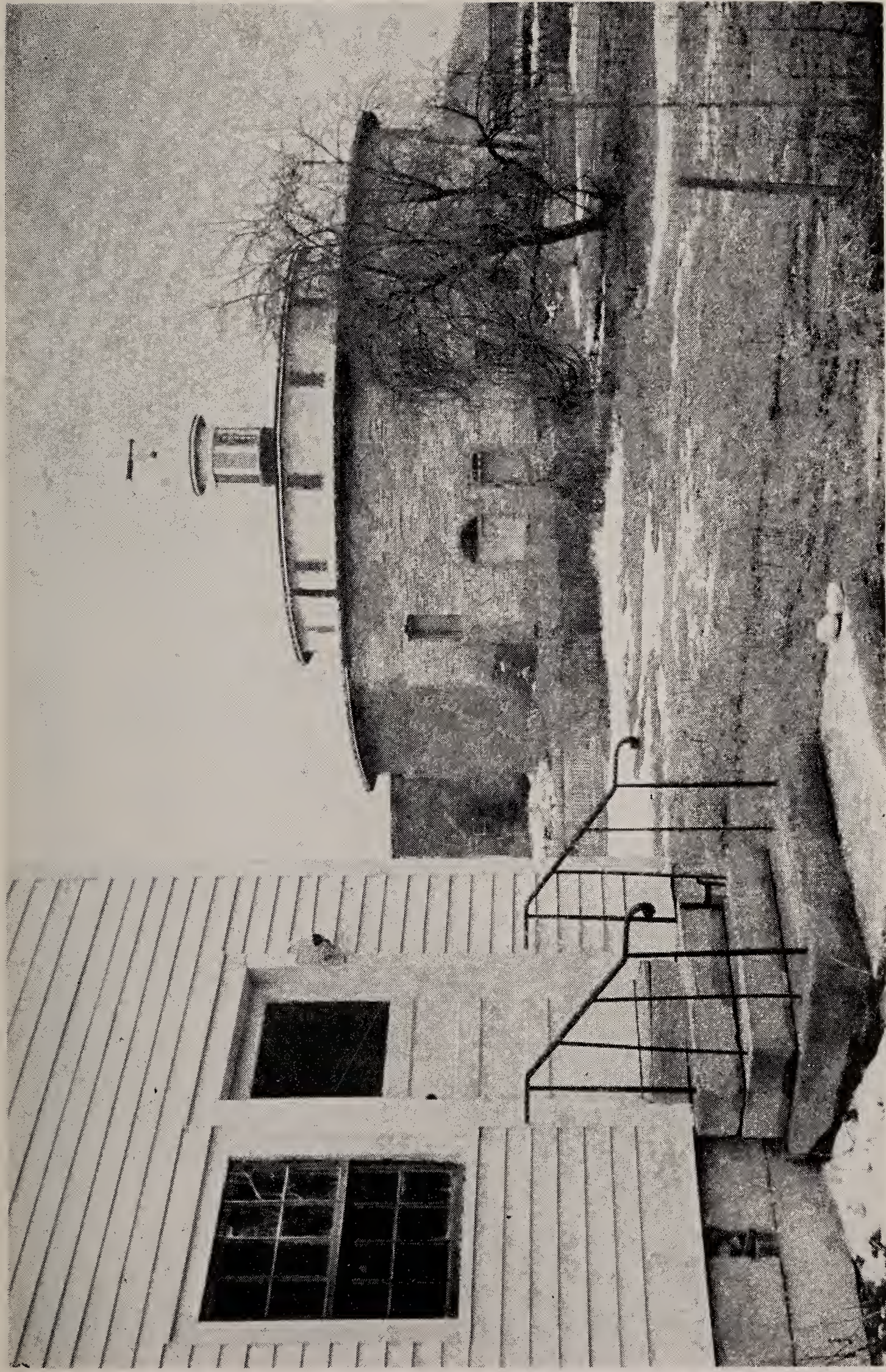




*Berkshire Eagle—Tague*

School's out at North Junior High





*Berkshire Eagle—Tague*

The round barn of the Shaker Family in Hancock, just across the Pittsfield line





Temple of Chamber Music, South Mountain

*Kalischer*





*Berkshire Eagle—Tague*

On the ski slopes at Bousquet's

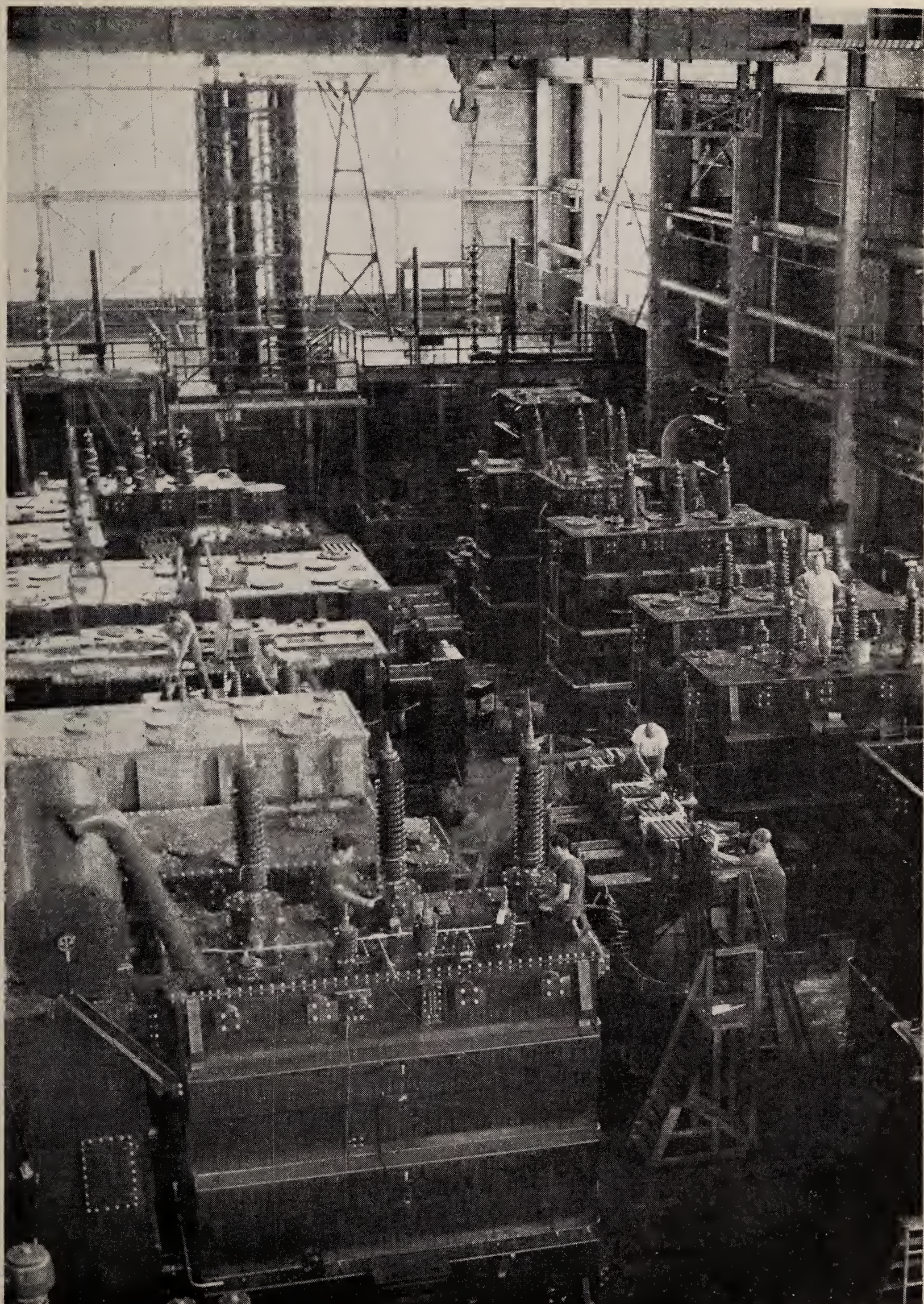




*Berkshire Eagle—Tague*

Sailboat race, Pontoosuc Lake





*General Electric Co.*

One of the areas for testing and finishing large power transformers at GE's Morningside plant





*Berkshire Eagle—Tague*

North Street, Saturday afternoon



## V

### *World War I Years*

THE YEAR 1916 OPENED quietly in Pittsfield with the observance of two anniversaries. Early on New Year's day, with some no doubt feeling the ill effects of their gaiety the night before, hundreds were up and out of their houses before dawn, making their way in the frosty dark toward Park Square to attend the New Year's sunrise prayer meeting at the First Church. Long part of the Pittsfield tradition, it was the 100th anniversary of this service, which went back to the days when people came from miles around on horseback or in jingling sleighs to greet the year's first sunrise by praying together in the old wooden meetinghouse, later congregating in the Park, then a simple village green, for talk and the ringing exchange of "Happy New Year."

The centennial of the sunrise prayer meeting was attended by more than 800 people, men and women of many denominations, who crowded into the First Church to bow their heads as the pastor, the Reverend James E. Gregg, led the prayers. Ministers of other churches spoke from the pulpit—the Reverends Charles P. MacGregor of the First Baptist Church, Warren S. Archibald of the Pilgrim Memorial Church, Werner L. Genzmer of the German Lutheran Church, and Earl C. Davis of the Unity Church. Messages of congratulation from almost all of

the city's churches were read in a happy manifestation of Christian love and brotherhood not always so apparent.

Two days later, on January 3, a large crowd gathered in the Colonial Theatre on South Street to celebrate Pittsfield's 25th anniversary as a city. The principal speakers were Charles E. Hibbard, first mayor of the city, and ex-mayors John C. Crosby and Walter F. Hawkins. Reviewing the city's rapid growth and major accomplishments since 1891, the speakers seemed to agree, in the spirit of the occasion, that with faith and hard work Pittsfield's possibilities were practically limitless.

In his address, Hibbard took occasion to remark that it was time to begin thinking again about a change in the frame of government—a reform that would not come for many years. The 1891 charter was already “out of date and wholly inadequate,” Hibbard declared, saying that he favored a city manager type of government.

At the meeting, Mayor George W. Faulkner was inducted into office for his second term and spoke on the community's immediate problems and concerns. The city debt, he reported, stood at \$2,847,577, having been reduced more than \$65,000 within a year. On every street—or at least, on one side of every street—there should be good sidewalks of stone, brick, or cement. A new and much larger high school building was urgently needed—a constantly recurring theme in Pittsfield's annals.

The Mayor might also have mentioned the need of a new city hall to replace the old town hall built in 1832. A new police station was also badly needed. The old lockup on School Street, as an increasing number complained, was a scandal, “a demoralizing element in the community.” Men locked up for being drunk were constantly shouting out the windows “all sorts of vile things at each other and at passersby” as school children gathered to enjoy the fun and watch the “Black Maria” drive up to disgorge its occupants on the street for all to see, no matter what their condition.

But the most urgent problem, most citizens agreed, was presented by the state of Pittsfield's streets and roads. The streets,



even the main streets, were "in a deplorable condition . . . ridiculed by everybody using them," Mayor Faulkner declared in pointing to the need of a paving program. As a start, he recommended that South, East, and Tyler streets be paved. But the Council did not agree, and the matter was shelved for the moment.

A few blocks along North Street had been paved, but this "improvement" left much to be desired. The pavement kept cracking up under increasingly heavy traffic, leaving big holes that rattled the teeth of motorists and wagoners when their vehicles hit them, as they could not help doing, the holes being so large and numerous.

For better or worse, the day of the automobile had arrived. Motor vehicles in rapidly mounting numbers rolled along the streets and highways as the revolutionary new techniques of assembly-line production went into high gear, led by the old Model-T Ford, ugly and rather uncomfortable, without any frills at all, but usually reliable when the going got rough, which was often. On South Street, in the beginning of Automobile Row, one could buy a Model-T for \$375, or fancier models at a higher price—an Overland touring car, say, for \$615.

The city saw its first automobile show in February 1916. Sponsored by the newly formed Berkshire County Automobile Association, it was held for three days in the Armory, where "25 or more machines" were polished up, along with the salesmen, and placed on view. Thousands from Pittsfield and neighboring towns attended this "creditable affair," at which a few machines were sold.

Though by today's standard there were relatively few cars, they were already creating all kinds of new problems. Town streets and country highways had not been built for the automobile. Chief of Police John L. Sullivan was constantly warning citizens against traffic and worse hazards.

"The list of automobile accidents published day by day is a disgrace," observed the local press. "The Monday morning newspapers, with their record of Sunday maiming and slaugh-

ter, sound like a dispatch from bloody Belgium. Speed limits should be strictly enforced and held to 30 miles an hour.”

Unemployment was a more local and serious concern. The outbreak of World War I, with repercussions felt round the globe, had affected Pittsfield adversely for a time. The war disrupted normal channels of trade. American business generally faced grave uncertainties. Lacking orders, local factories slowed down, throwing thousands out of work. This, in turn, affected retail trade and other business.

New building construction, a fairly reliable index of general economic conditions, fell off sharply in Pittsfield during 1915, declining to a mere \$670,000, less than half the figure for the year before and only a quarter of what it had been in 1911. The local unemployment rate at the end of 1915 was the highest for any city in the state, reaching almost 15 per cent, a wide difference from Brockton's low of 2 per cent.

A rapid recovery in prosperity occurred early in 1916 when war orders, largely financed by American loans, began to flood in from Europe—for guns, ammunition, machinery, woolens for uniforms and blankets, food, fuel, and other items. Local woolen mills resumed full operation and were soon running overtime with all-night shifts. Officials at the General Electric plant reported that their business, while not back to normal, was ten times better than a year before. By April 1916 the plant was employing 5,300 people; by the end of the year, almost 7,500, who were taking home a record payroll of more than \$125,000 a week.

To hold workers and recruit new ones, the textile mills—the Berkshire, Pontoosuc, Russell, Tillotson, and others—voluntarily raised wages 5 per cent and reduced hours from 55 to 50 a week. Within a few months, they again offered a wage increase, this time of 10 per cent, granting another 10 per cent increase a short time later. The General Electric increased wage rates and expanded its plant to take care of the growing demands upon it.

The war boom was on, with wages and profits soaring, and prices along with them, exciting loud and general complaints



against "extortion" and "profiteering." The local price of anthracite coal shot up to \$10.50 a ton, almost twice what it had been the year before. Pittsfield was paying \$1.75 for a bushel of potatoes, which, not so long before, had been selling at four bushels for a dollar. Even so, one could still get at local markets a choice sirloin steak at 22 cents a pound, and fresh country eggs at 17 cents a dozen.

With labor in great demand, the war boom precipitated a rather curious social crisis that ultimately transformed millions of American homes, drastically upsetting the traditional division of labor between the sexes. Attracted by higher wages and greater personal independence, girls and women began going into the factories in large numbers for the first time, causing matrons in Pittsfield, as elsewhere, to moan about "the servant problem." It was almost impossible to get anyone to work as a housemaid or cook. Those willing to do so were asking fabulous wages—as much as \$6 a week, plus a night off and other privileges. Well, came the chant over the tea cups, what was the world coming to!

A local editor, in a philosophic mood, supplied a realistic answer: "When a girl can enter a factory and earn \$8 to \$10 a week, she is slow to go into a home and take \$3 a week. . . . Servants are luxuries today. Where they formerly jumped at \$3 a week, they often ask double that sum." Housewives were having to don the apron. And let husbands not think it below their dignity "to help clean house, or wipe the dishes," said the editor, gratuitously adding the sop that the "saving is substantial and may be the foundation of a fortune."

Two other questions were vexing the sexes in Pittsfield and throughout the land—prohibition and woman suffrage. Many determined Pittsfield women were very active in the local chapter of the Equal Suffrage Association, a nationwide organization with 125,000 members in Massachusetts. The Suffragettes were becoming increasingly militant—"very un-lady-like," the more conventional fumed—picketing the White House and putting heavy pressure on President Wilson to sponsor an equal suffrage amendment to the Federal constitu-

tion. Twelve states had already granted women the right to vote, and in 1917 New York joined their ranks, adopting woman suffrage by a decisive majority, which encouraged those in Pittsfield who felt that "government of all the people by half the people is a contradiction in terms."

There was even more violent debate, often quite fanatical, on the "liquor question," with the "wets" and the "drys" each seizing every opportunity to consign the other to the nethermost depths of hell. A concerted drive against Demon Rum had started in 1874 with the organization of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, which adopted a white ribbon as its badge. The campaign had become bi-sexual when the Anti-Saloon League was formed in Ohio in 1893, becoming a national organization two years later, having the strong support of the Protestant Evangelical churches. The White Ribbon campaign in Pittsfield dated back more than forty years, to the founding of a WCTU chapter in 1875.

By 1916, nineteen states had prohibited the making, transportation, and sale of alcoholic drink within their confines, and the Berkshires were beginning to dry up. Lenox had just voted to join the prohibition ranks, and the White Ribboners in Pittsfield and other Berkshire towns were very hopeful, with good reason. Their "no license" campaign soon won in North Adams, closing all saloons and bars there. It almost won in Pittsfield, losing by only 99 votes—3,337 to 3,436.

In the spring of 1916, a new word began to be stressed in dispatches from Washington—"Preparedness." It seemed to be a good idea in a troubled world, but some asked for specifications—preparedness against what? Against invasion by Germany, which seemed to be fully occupied along two long battlefronts, east and west? Against trouble with Mexico, from which no serious threat to our security could be expected? Pittsfield shared the official views of the administration and the general feeling of the country, that, if possible, we should not get embroiled in the fighting in Europe, or anywhere. In any case, on June 8, 1916, Pittsfield staged a large preparedness parade, with some 3,000 marchers in line.



A national citizens committee sponsored by Major General Leonard Wood began organizing military camps for the training of officers. Some thirty men from Pittsfield attended the camp held at Plattsburg, New York, in the spring and summer of 1916. These camps helped to relieve the dearth of officers as the Army expanded.

Meantime, trouble had broken out with Mexico, which had been in revolution for years. Anti-American feeling ran high among all parties there because the United States had intervened with armed force more than once. Fighting was still going on. When one of the rebel chieftains, Pancho Villa, led raids into Texas and New Mexico with the loss of American lives, Washington dispatched an expeditionary force to the Border under the command of General John J. ("Black Jack") Pershing, with orders to take Villa "dead or alive."

The Massachusetts National Guard quickly received a call to mobilize for service on the Mexican border. By dawn on June 19, 1916, within four hours of receiving the call, the city's militia company, Company F of the 2nd Massachusetts Regiment, was assembled in the Armory on Summer Street.

Two days later, "amid cheers and tears," with flags flying and bands playing, Company F marched to the station and entrained for the mobilization point at South Framingham, having 83 men in line under the command of Captain Ambrose Clogher, not being up to its full strength of 142 men.

The Board of Trade, under President George A. Newman, appointed a special committee "to learn if any of the families of the militiamen are suffering financial hardship, and to devise ways of relieving it." Hardship was bound to be involved, for the pay of militiamen at that time—and that of regulars, too—was \$15 a month. The General Electric gave two weeks' pay to help the dependents of its employees serving in Company F.

After a week at South Framingham, Company F departed for the Border. There it was assigned to guarding General Pershing's supply depot at Columbus, New Mexico. The Berkshire men did not like the Southwest desert, finding it "hot, windy, and sultry." The tedium of camp was relieved in part,

and contact with home maintained, by the special Border edition of the *Eagle* which arrived daily for free distribution among the Berkshire men on the Villa front.

Some months later, the troops of the 2nd Massachusetts were reviewed by General Pershing. "Excellent," he pronounced them—quickly adding, however, that they were not yet ready for combat. Company F was rated second in efficiency among the Massachusetts National Guard units. Without having seen any fighting, Company F was back home and mustered out early in November.

Meantime, trouble had developed on the Pittsfield front. Early in August 1916, the spinners in the woolen mills walked out in a dispute about hours and piece rates. The strike continued for more than two months, seriously cutting production.

At this time, the trade unions in the city had a membership of 1,156, organized in fourteen locals, most of them being craft unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. Pittsfield had the distinction of being the only city in the state where the beer wagon drivers were organized, in the Bottlers' Union. Of all enterprises in the city, only the publishers could say, as they often did, that they had "100 per cent union offices."

On the heels of the spinners' walk-out came a great strike at the General Electric plant. Conflict began when the company announced, in offering a 5 per cent pay increase, that if any employees had complaints or grievances, the management was willing to talk with them as individuals or through committees chosen from their ranks, but would not deal with any trade unions as such. Officers of two national unions—of the Carpenters and Joiners, and of the Patternmakers—came to Pittsfield and set up headquarters in the Eagles' building on First Street.

The strike began on September 2, when some 5,000 workers, including about 600 women, walked out and organized a great demonstration that was not soon forgotten. Though conducted with exemplary order, this first large labor demonstration in Pittsfield, as old-timers still recall, sent "shivers" down many a spine.



Assembling on Kellogg Street, the strikers marched two abreast, in almost complete silence, down North Street, around Park Square, along East Street, and up First Street to the Common where speakers, mounted on big packing boxes as a rostrum, addressed them for an hour or more, urging them to stand fast, remain orderly, and keep away from the saloons.

After the meeting, the crowd broke up quietly. As it was Saturday, pay day, the strikers returned to the plant individually or in small groups to pick up their envelopes. Prayers for the quick settlement of the dispute were offered in the Sunday services of most churches the next day.

On the following day, Labor Day, there was an even bigger parade and a field day, organized by the Central Labor Union Council. With American flags flying and bands playing, with many floats in the procession, thousands of workers with their families and friends marched through the main streets and then to Hick's Grove for a picnic, speeches, and an afternoon of sports.

With the General Electric works being picketed, Mayor Faulkner brought in some State police and some Metropolitan Police from Boston, about forty in all, "to help maintain order around the plant." As there had been no disorder except for a few personal clashes, the Mayor's action was roundly criticized, most sharply by many who were not parties to the dispute, and the outside police were withdrawn a week later.

To counter union attempts at organization, a number of larger Berkshire manufacturers met in Pittsfield and organized an Employers' Association, choosing as its first president Cummings C. Chesney, head of the struck General Electric plant. Its first aim, the Association proclaimed, was "to defend the American principle of the Open Shop." To that end, it would establish an employment agency where "deserving and efficient" workers might find jobs, but no union members need apply.

After the strike had continued a month, a settlement was effected through the State Board of Conciliation and Arbitration. The strikers accepted the General Electric's original offer. The only point they won was that in rehiring, strikers were not

to be discriminated against. The spinners, too, went back to work in the woolen mills on their old terms. Two months later, General Electric announced a 10 per cent bonus to all employees making less than \$2,500 a year. At the same time, the Rice silk mills and other local companies granted bonus payments. For several years the industrial front remained quiet as public attention turned to other affairs.

Great issues were involved in the national elections of 1916. Resigning from the United States Supreme Court, Charles Evans Hughes had been named as the Republican presidential candidate. The Democrats renominated President Woodrow Wilson. It was a cruel and bitterly fought campaign, and many in Pittsfield took an interest more personal than usual in the candidates.

Hughes' father, a Baptist minister in up-state New York, had preached in Pittsfield many times and was well remembered. During the campaign, the city got a peek at Hughes in the flesh when his train stopped briefly in the station one night and the sleepy candidate came to the rear platform to take a bow, "in pajamas and a raincoat."

Pittsfield's interest in President Wilson had a romantic touch. After his first wife's death in 1914 it had seemed for a time that a Pittsfield woman would succeed her as the First Lady of the Land—Mrs. Mary Hulbert Peck, a charming woman in her early fifties, divorced wife of the city's prominent textile manufacturer, Thomas D. Peck. Mrs. Peck had long been a friend of the Wilsons, often visiting them. After his wife's death, the President became more friendly, frequently writing her intimate letters with "affectionate regards." Mrs. Peck later recalled saving lace for the costume she planned to wear at her anticipated wedding in the White House.

The romance aroused much whispering from coast to coast and occasioned considerable political turmoil in the inner Wilson circles when the President, with the 1916 campaign approaching, announced his intention of marrying another woman, a widow, Mrs. Norman Galt.



Mrs. Peck and her friends in Pittsfield, Washington, and elsewhere were not pleased. But Mrs. Peck resisted the determined efforts made during the campaign to have her release the "affectionate" letters to serve low partisan purpose. She later declared that she had been offered \$300,000 for release of the letters. On the other hand, it was charged—falsely, it seems—that she had been paid \$75,000 by Wilson's friends to keep the embarrassing letters secret.

Pittsfield had another personal interest in the Wilson administration. One of the abler and stronger members of the Cabinet had grown up in the city, being a graduate of the high school, and was well remembered—William Cox Redfield, Secretary of Commerce from 1913 to 1919. In his younger days, Redfield had worked for a time in the local post office.

On election day, the neighboring Berkshire town of New Ashford, the smallest incorporated town in the state in population (92) and one of the smallest in area, made national and international headlines for the first time. By ten in the morning, leading the country, it reported the complete returns on its presidential balloting—16 votes for Hughes, 7 for Wilson—front-page news around the world, flashed from Pittsfield by the editors of the *Eagle* who had been instrumental in staging the coup.

Always eager to gaze into the crystal ball and report their visions, professional politicians in both parties used New Ashford to shout confident predictions. The results there, said some, clearly portended an overwhelming Republican landslide. On the contrary, said others, they unmistakably indicated an invincible Democratic upsurge, for New Ashford had never cast such a large proportion of Democratic votes since the Civil War, or before.

Pittsfield, Berkshire County, and Massachusetts all followed New Ashford in giving Hughes a majority, though by much smaller margins. The day after election it appeared that Hughes had won. The result remained in doubt until two days later when the final returns came in from California, revealing that the Democrats had carried that state by less than 4,000 votes,

but sufficient to assure the President's reelection by a narrow margin of electoral votes.

The Wilson campaign had been waged and won on the slogan, "He kept us out of war." After the election, however, it soon became evident that American policy was hardening toward Germany and its allies, especially after their resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare which took a mounting toll of American lives and ships, including the U.S.S. *Housatonic*, a merchantman carrying grain to London.

At a special session of the Congress on April 2, 1917, the President called for a declaration of war, denouncing German submarine policy as "warfare against mankind," declaring in a phrase that later took an ironic tone, "The world must be made safe for democracy." The United States formally declared war on Germany four days later, subsequently breaking with her allies.

Pittsfield was ready for the emergency, spurred on by many patriotic meetings, speeches, and sermons. Anticipating developments, Mayor Moulton had appointed a Committee on Public Safety, with Arthur W. Eaton as president of its Executive Committee, W. D. Wyman as vice president, and City Clerk Miller D. Steever as secretary.

As the very first measure of safety and security, howled certain super-patriots, stronger of voice than of mind, the city should forever ban the teaching of German in the schools. No German books were to be read either in the original or in translation. Even some of the more sensible went along for a time with the nonsense of calling sauerkraut "Liberty cabbage."

But Pittsfield, for the most part, kept its balance and did not give way to hysteria or blind rage, though there were a few unpleasant incidents in the schools when the children of German parents were set upon by other children. Quick action by the press, the teachers, the clergy, and decent people generally soon put a stop to this.

Functioning efficiently and with purpose, the Public Safety Committee directed and coordinated the activities of dozens of



other committees working on special projects. The committee joined with the mayor in urging everybody to plant a home vegetable plot—"a war garden"—for almost anything might happen. A Home Guard of sixty men was organized, with 300 in reserve. In want of rifles, the Guard did its exercises for months with sticks and wooden guns. The Berkshire County Red Cross Ambulance Corps 13 had been formed and was in training, with Pittsfield as its headquarters.

Responding to the call for greatly increased enlistments, many younger men in the city—and many older ones, too—volunteered for service in the Army, Navy, or Marines. In one day alone, fifty-two men enlisted in the Army, and twelve in the Navy. On March 31, even before war was declared, Company F, as part of the 2nd Regiment of the Massachusetts National Guard, had been mustered into Federal service.

"Put your flags out!" blazoned the *Eagle* and the whole city responded as the men of Company F, pushing through excited crowds, assembled in the Armory to be assigned to new duties. They were soon detailed to action—or inaction—"somewhere in Massachusetts." Their whereabouts was supposed to be a deep military secret, a matter of national security. But as members of the company were in town almost every day on leave or on military business, everybody knew where they were. They were guarding the rail lines east of Pittsfield, being bored stiff for weeks there until they were brought back to the Armory to prepare for more serious business.

On July 5, under orders to report at camp in Greenfield, Company F marched through the streets to the railroad station, 144 strong, honored with such ceremony and public demonstration as had not been seen since 1861 when the Allen Guard departed for the Civil War. Singing "Onward Christian Soldiers," a large parade escorted "Pittsfield's own" to the train. It was considered noteworthy that there was "no speech-making," doubtless to the soldiers' great relief. The young get easily bored with their elders' oratory and stentorian calls to fight.

To learn how the men of Company F were faring, a special citizens committee visited them at their camp on the fair grounds at Greenfield, carrying for each soldier a package of chewing gum and four packs of cigarettes. When the *Eagle* had started a campaign to help keep the soldiers in tobacco and a few extras, some raised strong "moral" objections against the sin of supplying them with the "filthy weed," especially in the form of cigarettes—"coffin nails!" But this bothered only a few. In Company F there were only ten non-smokers, and these had no "moral" or other objections to having their buddies smoke, or chew.

Company F, the visiting committee discovered, was short of many things—tents, blankets, cots, service shoes, hats, and proper-fitting uniforms. But the food was good, served in style on the Company's own chinaware brought from the Armory. The boys told the committee they were now hoping to have oil-cloth on the tables. An old cement watering trough served as wash basin and laundry tub. With Yankee ingenuity, they had rigged up a hot shower system with the help of an old whiskey barrel. As the soldiers had received their first pay just before the committee arrived, quite a few were not on hand to receive gifts and messages from home, having taken "French leave." But they "were expected back soon" for some exercise in the "bull pen" or the latrines.

Pittsfield and Company F suffered their first war fatality when First Lieutenant Charles H. Ingram took sick and died. The flags in the city flew at half-mast as he was buried from the First Methodist Church with military honors, his casket being escorted to the grave by four squads of Company F led by Captain Clogher.

After a month at Greenfield, the battalion there was moved to Westfield on August 7 to join the rest of the 2nd Massachusetts Regiment. The latter soon became the 104th Infantry of the 26th Division, later famed as the "Yankee Division," commanded by Major General Clarence R. Edwards, an 1883 graduate of West Point.

Company F at this time consisted of two officers and 118



men from Pittsfield, two officers and 99 men from Haverhill and vicinity, and two officers and forty men from Camp Devens and the First Officers' Training Camp. With the reassignment of Captain Clogher, the company was commanded by Captain Thomas H. Ireland, formerly of Company H of the 6th Massachusetts Regiment.

On September 25, after little more than a month of active training at Westfield, the 104th Infantry pulled out of Camp Bartlett "for parts unknown." Pittsfield suspected that Company F was on its way overseas, which was the case. Sailing from Montreal on H.M.S. *Corsican*, the units landed at Liverpool on October 17, immediately proceeding to France, where they entered intensive training for three months at Harreville les Chanteurs, in the Haute Marne.

Previously, on August 29, in its first move toward the European battlefronts, Ambulance Company 13 of the Berkshire County Red Cross left Pittsfield for Camp Devens, at Ayer, Massachusetts. Consisting of 119 men under Captain Robert J. Carpenter, a North Adams doctor, the unit entrained with twelve ambulances, a touring car, a supply car, and three motorcycles. Of the \$31,259 spent for its equipment, Pittsfield subscribed \$7,106, with the Board of Trade contributing \$1,800 and General Electric \$800. At Camp Devens the unit became Ambulance Company 301, and was later commanded by Captain Melvin H. Walker, a Pittsfield physician.

Meantime, on June 5, all men in the country aged twenty-one to thirty-one had registered under the new selective service law. In Pittsfield, 4,232 registered and were given numbers on the "draft" roll. The drawing of numbers began on July 20. The first number drawn was #258. On the Pittsfield register, this number was held by 29-year-old John McCulloch, of Hancock. But as he had a wife and three children, he was not subject to call. The first Pittsfield man to be accepted for selective service was Randolph Troy, a General Electric engineer.

The city's first draft quota was 271 men. But the draft numbers of 592 Pittsfield men were drawn, for Washington had estimated that at least 40 per cent in any draft group would

fail in their physical examinations, that of the remainder at least half would have dependents and therefore be exempt under the law.

The vanguard of the selective service men, just three in all—Randolph Troy, Alexander Connors, and Charles E. Thompson—left on September 5 for Camp Devens after a cheering salute at City Hall. They were soon followed by a contingent of 108 men, and then by others till the quota was filled. Within six months of the declaration of war, Pittsfield had more than a thousand people in service, including twelve women.

The war began to pinch the home front severely and brought Pittsfield many public and private problems. Prices continued to soar, causing serious concern and mounting criticism of the administration. Many complained that the beer was no good, being literally just “suds,” now that its alcoholic content had been cut as a war measure to 2.5 per cent. The making of whiskey and other hard liquor had been stopped for the duration. But as the distilleries had 270,000,000 gallons on hand, the only immediate effect was to raise the price of whiskey from a dime to 20 cents a glass.

As American advertising ballyhoo was just coming into its own with its “personal” approach, the country was plastered with patriotic posters, including the favorite in which a grim Uncle Sam was pointing a long finger at the beholder and saying, *I want You!* Or such admonitions as: *Save the Wheat for Victory!* . . . *Save Fuel to Fire the Kaiser!*

Numerous local committees forwarded the national campaign to conserve food and fuel. People were requested—indeed, virtually commanded—to eat less bread, meat, and sugar. Mondays and Wednesdays were “wheatless” days. Mondays were also “wetless,” as the saloons were closed. Tuesdays and Fridays were “meatless,” Saturdays “porkless,” while every day was a fat-saving and sugar-saving day. As time went on, more and more wheat substitutes were baked into “victory” bread, cakes, and pastries.

Authorities in Washington, dealers in food, women’s organizations, and individual housewives published “tested”



recipes for such strange delicacies as "corn flour sponge cake," "potato pudding," and "oatmeal betty." For two years, like the rest of the country, Pittsfield ate more rice, corn meal, porridge, bran, barley, and oats than ever before—or since. To wheatless, meatless, and what some called "eatless" days were now added others even harder to bear.

The winter of 1917-18 was a very severe one, the coldest in New England since 1894. It was a really rugged winter, downright brutal, as old-timers well recall. It was probably the worst winter Pittsfield ever suffered, for to natural causes were added serious complications arising from the war.

Winter started early, in mid-December, and heavy snow and bitter cold continued without respite for months. On December 15, 1917, the mercury in Pittsfield dropped to 22 degrees below and was slow in climbing up again. Very heavy snows followed. On December 31, the temperature plunged again, down to 35 degrees below—Hinsdale reported 42 below. The mercury seemed frozen in the tube, for at some time every day for the next ten days the thermometer registered zero or below, often far below.

A succession of blizzards then swept the Berkshires, bringing transportation in and around Pittsfield almost to a halt. With goods in short supply, the prices of most things, already very high from war-time inflation, went higher, arousing loud and angry outcries against "extortion."

As if this were not bad enough, there was an acute fuel shortage, a coal famine, caused by the war. Pittsfield was freezing, with almost everybody clamoring for coal and none to be had at any price. Fires went out in furnaces, stoves, and grates all over the city. Miles of pipe froze, creating serious water and sewage problems. On January 18, 1918, the authorities closed the schools until further notice and put the city into the fuel business, taking coal out of the school bunkers and selling it in 100-pound lots to those most desperately in need of it.

Driven out of frosty houses, many families doubled up with relatives, friends, or neighbors lucky enough to have some

"black diamonds" in the cellar. A number of Protestant churches combined their Sunday services. To add the spice of surprise, which minister would preach the next Sunday was not announced.

Someone suggested that wood would still burn and that before Pittsfield froze, it might be well to chop some. This sent a number of parties into the woods, public and private, for "some real lively wood-chopping." The exercise kept the men warm, though many complained, usually quite profanely, that logs had certainly grown harder and tougher since they were boys. The wood-chopping "bees" sent several to the hospital with "broken" backs and other ailments, and inspired a lively sale of Sloan's liniment and snake oil. But the wood put a little heat into many cold houses. The wonder was that more people were not seriously ill.

To complicate matters and compound Pittsfield's woes, the trolley system upon which almost everybody depended for transportation completely broke down, inspiring city-wide curses "loud and long, deep and fervent." The complaint was general that "we can't start anywhere, or get anywhere . . . The trolley service, notoriously bad, is the worst ever, with no relief in sight."

The trolley breakdown seemed almost like the last straw to many thousands of busy people who had to walk to and from work in the bitter cold and through heavy snow, some of them for miles. No trolley cars operated for days at a time, and when they did, only by fits and starts.

"It used to be news when a car was off the track," the press remarked. "Now it is news when one is on." On several occasions the *Eagle* had to deliver its papers to Dalton by sleigh. When a lone trolley occasionally crept down South Street, mothers in the houses along the way, so the story goes, would run to the window and cry, "Come quick, children, and see the street car."

The heavy weather had put too much of a strain on outworn equipment. The company's old cars went "lame" and were hard to repair because the war made it very difficult to get spare



parts. Finally, the local General Electric plant helped out by bringing the cars into one of its new buildings, and repairing the motors on the spot.

As the coal situation got worse, the president of neighboring Williams College, Dr. Harry A. Garfield, was made Federal Fuel Administrator with power to take drastic measures to conserve fuel and electric power. He immediately decreed that all factories and businesses east of the Mississippi, except those specifically exempted, should save coal by closing down for five days, which made thousands of Pittsfield workers idle and cost them a week's pay.

Garfield then decreed that Mondays should be "heatless." All stores and offices should remain closed on that day. On other weekdays, they would open at nine and close at five, with no electric lights burning after that hour. Lights would go out in theatres, saloons, and such places at ten each evening. Pittsfield, as instructed, cut its street lighting to a minimum. Every night but Saturday night was "lightless" for the stores. With show windows dark and scarcely a light showing, North Street at night was a black and eerie canyon with little moving but the bitter winter wind as it whistled around the corners piling snow drifts higher.

Washington also announced that on April 1 all clocks would be moved forward an hour, the beginning of daylight saving time, which was introduced not to pleasure city folks, or discommode farmers, but as a fuel- and power-conserving measure.

On January 25, 1918, it appeared by official warning that all industries in New England might have to close down within a few days for want of coal. "Good weather is our only hope," and prayers went up to assure that.

Three days later, the heaviest blizzard of the winter hit the Northeast, tying up the railroads. Attempts to get coal to New England by water failed when the coal barges got stuck in Long Island and Vineyard sounds, blocked by great drifts of ice larger than had been seen for fifty years. With Pittsfield seriously talking of "grabbing" the next car of coal that came through,

no matter what its destination, the thermometer took another steep plunge. On February 3, at noon, the temperature stood at 19 degrees below, a local record for the day. Things were beginning to assume the aspect of a nightmare.

But a few days later, to the city's immense relief, some soft coal began to come in. Pittsfield had always burned hard coal. But at the moment, anything that smoked seemed a fire. The high school was reopened, and the lower schools during the next few weeks. February 18 was the last "heatless" Monday.\* More blizzards were bound Pittsfield's way, but the worst was over. It had been a long ordeal, and everybody was certainly happy when "pussy willow" days came again in the spring of 1918.

But the spring was otherwise dark, overshadowed by grave news from the battlefields. The Eastern Front had collapsed; the Bolsheviki in control of Russia had signed a separate peace with the Germans. Concentrating her armies on the Western Front, Germany was smashing at the Allied and American lines, puncturing great holes in them. Growing casualty lists began to appear in our newspapers, with Pittsfield and all of Berkshire watching anxiously as their men went into action.

On February 6, Company F with the rest of the 104th Infantry was ordered to the thundering Chemin des Dames sector and remained there till March 21, seeing nineteen days of front line duty, suffering one killed and four wounded. It had scarcely returned to rest camp when it was sent to the Toul-Boucq sector, where it remained from April 1 to June 29, serving twenty-four days of front line duty during which it had six men killed and twenty-five wounded. In the heavy fighting here the 104th Infantry so distinguished itself that it won the honor of being the first American regiment ever to have its colors decorated by the French government.

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\*Later, "gasless" Sundays were ordered. There was to be no driving for pleasure on that day. Motorists grumbled, but they constituted a small minority. The car-less majority was delighted. "We never enjoyed such a quiet Sunday as this last past," they declared. "It was heavenly." The ban on Sunday joy-riding had another marked effect—the churches were much better attended than usual.



Company F then fought in the great Aisne-Marne offensive, the turning battle of the war, being at Chateau-Thierry from June 13 to July 30. Serving in the front lines twenty-five of those days, it lost eighty-two men, with eighteen killed and sixty-four wounded.

The company later fought the retreating Germans in the St. Mihiel salient, from September 5 to October 8, and in the Meuse-Argonne sector, from October 18 to the Armistice. During these final months of the war, it stood front line duty for thirty-two days, and had eight killed and sixty-one wounded. Pittsfield could be extremely proud, as indeed it was, of "its own" Company F.

In other units on land and sea, and in the air, more Pittsfield men were serving in the ranks or as officers, fighting and dying. The Distinguished Service Cross and the Distinguished Flying Cross were won for "extraordinary heroism in action" by Lieutenant Lloyd Andrews Hamilton, son of the Reverend John A. Hamilton, for many years pastor of the First Methodist Church. A flying ace with many enemy planes to his credit, Lieutenant Hamilton was killed in action near Cambrai in August 1918. A military air base in California is named for him—Hamilton Field, near San Francisco—where he had done his training.

One of the great heroes of the war was a graduate of the Pittsfield High School, and of Williams College and the Harvard Law School, Lieutenant Colonel Charles W. Whittlesey, son of Frank R. Whittlesey, production manager for many years at the local General Electric plant. Young Whittlesey won the Congressional Medal of Honor as leader of the renowned Lost Battalion, part of the 308th Infantry of the 77th Division, which was largely composed of New York state men.

Leading an attack on the Meuse-Argonne front on October 2, 1918, the battalion under Whittlesey, then a major, won its objective. The units on either flank, however, failed to do so, leaving the battalion without support. The Germans surrounded it, firing at it from all sides. Even worse, American artillery began pounding it by mistake. More than half of the battalion's

600 men were killed or wounded. Under a white flag of truce, the opposing German commander sent Whittlesey a message suggesting surrender before the battalion was wiped out.

"Go to Hell!" was Whittlesey's reported reply, which made headlines throughout the country. But some years later, another version was published, based on an account of the Lost Battalion written jointly by Whittlesey and his second in command, Captain (later Major) George W. McMurtry.

"No answer whatever, written or verbal, was made to the German commander's letter. Whittlesey ordered the two white airplane panels taken in at once. There was nothing white showing in the American position."\*

After five days of fierce resistance, with rations spent and ammunition almost exhausted, a message got through to the Lost Battalion that relief was on the way. It so happened, curiously, that some Pittsfield men in the ambulance unit from the Berkshires were among the first to meet the brave and badly battered Lost Battalion as it left the lines.

One of ninety-five heroes to be awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor during World War I, Whittlesey, ever reticent and retiring, disappeared at sea in 1921, while on a voyage from New York to Havana.

Whittlesey's name and fame are preserved on a bronze memorial tablet in the State House at Boston. Dedicated in 1924, the tablet bears the names of the four sons of Massachusetts who won the Congressional Medal of Honor during the war. Of the four, Whittlesey and Ralph Talbot were of old Yankee stock. The third was George Dilboy, a Greek immigrant; and the fourth, Michael J. Perkins, son of an Irish immigrant. Courage knows no race, creed, color, caste, or nationality.

Even as the Lost Battalion was fighting for its life, it became evident that the end of the war was not far off. Germany's allies, one after the other, surrendered—Turkey, Bulgaria, and Austria—and Germany's last defenses were fast crumbling.

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\*For an excellent account of the Lost Battalion, see the *History of the 308th Infantry, 1917-19* (New York, 1927), written by L. Wardlaw Miles, a captain in the regiment.



On November 7 came a United Press dispatch that an armistice had been signed. As the word spread rapidly by telephone and word of mouth, the city became a bedlam as people poured into the streets, excited and yelling, slapping one another on the back, friends and strangers alike. Washington quickly denied the report, and the shouting died away. But in the morning four days later it rose again in redoubled volume as the local press put out extras with huge headlines, "GERMANY SURRENDERS." After killing millions and maiming millions more, the slaughter had ended.

The Mayor proclaimed the rest of the day a holiday, a rather gratuitous measure, for everybody would have taken the day off in any case. Park Square and the main streets were packed with laughing, shouting, and wildly elated crowds. All formalities were forgotten. The city celebrated as one big happy family.

Young and old danced in the street, or marched along singing lustily, accompanied by the tooting of factory whistles, the tolling of church bells, the scream of fire sirens, and the raucous blast of automobile horns. Girls almost mobbed any man in uniform they sighted. Mothers and fathers with sons in the service, wives anxious for their soldier husbands, wept openly with joy at being relieved at last of sharp, heart-tearing worries.

A new era, it seemed, had dawned. A passionate desire for peace was universal. A local wounded veteran very well summed up the general feeling among America's citizen soldiers.

"It was a damned good war," he said, "and I don't ever want to spoil the memory of it by another."

During the war, 2,750 men and thirty-two women from Pittsfield served in the armed forces. Of these, eighty-six died in service. Twenty-three had been killed in action, and thirteen had died of wounds. Disease took a higher toll—forty-two in all. Five died of accidents, and three were "missing," having passed to a fate unknown.

Pittsfield was happy that its sons and daughters were no longer under shot and shell. But its joy in the Armistice was

tempered by the great suffering and sorrow the city had recently experienced in a fearful influenza attack, the worst epidemic in its history. It struck without warning. The first case of "Spanish flu" was reported in Boston on September 18, 1918. Spreading with almost incredible speed, it was in Pittsfield two days later. Within a week, forty-five in the city had died of the disease, with more than six hundred cases reported and at least three times that many unreported.

The local schools were quickly closed, as were the theatres, churches, clubs, the courts, and all places of public resort. People were urged, almost commanded, to remain at home unless they had an imperative reason to go out. Even so, scarcely a household escaped the virulent contagion. Whole families perished. Doctors, nurses, health officers, and hospitals worked heroically to meet the emergency, taxing their strength and facilities to the utmost. But there were just not enough of them to tend all the sick and their needs. To help out, hundreds performed voluntary services, knowing full well they were risking their lives, and a number died in aiding their friends and neighbors.

By early November, six weeks after the outbreak of the epidemic, the influenza appeared to have run its course in Pittsfield, and the city counted up its grievous losses. Almost four hundred had died, and the health authorities estimated that one out of four in the city—some 10,000—had been sick with the "flu," more or less seriously. On November 7, the very day of the report of the "false Armistice," Mayor Moulton spoke of the city's tragedy and grief.

"These past weeks have been sad ones for many of the people of our city," he declared. "Coming almost without warning and sweeping rapidly onward, the epidemic of influenza and pneumonia has left us a community stricken as never before in our history. The traces of it will be seen and felt for years . . .

"The response to the calls for assistance have been wonderful . . . The wonderful nurses, the doctors, the women of the city who made possible the diet kitchens and the children's home, the Red Cross, the citizens who consented to act on the



Advisory Committee, the police and firemen, the government assistants, and the many others who assisted—all have our sincere thanks. What has been done is just another exhibition of the Pittsfield community spirit which, I believe, is not surpassed anywhere.”

The city had need of all the community spirit and cooperation it could muster, for more in Pittsfield were to die of the influenza, which shortly broke out again, though in less virulent form. Also, war casualty lists kept coming in, striking many a home in Pittsfield and the Berkshires. A large number of men in uniform died in the epidemic, which was particularly severe in Camp Devens, Massachusetts’ largest army base. More servicemen lost their lives in the epidemic than on the battlefields.

Under the circumstances, the celebration of Thanksgiving in 1918 was the quietest in years. There was no disposition to make it a happy holiday. Rather, more people than usual attended the churches for prayer and services. There was a community “sing” in the high school auditorium. The traditional high school football game on the Common was cancelled. With turkeys selling at 62 cents a pound, the highest price within memory, many families could not afford to have a bird on the table.

Throughout the war, Pittsfield had contributed very generously to all financial appeals. On May 25, 1917, to forward the first Liberty Loan drive, all business was suspended for an hour as the city concentrated on raising its quota of \$2,000,000, which it exceeded by \$220,000. Its quota for the Second Liberty Loan, \$4,000,000, was oversubscribed by more than \$800,000, with 11,200 of its citizens buying bonds. It exceeded its quotas on all of the war loan drives, at the same time contributing liberally to a local War Chest and to such national organizations as the YMCA, Red Cross, Salvation Army, and others serving the men in uniform.

Peace, welcome as it was, brought economic complications. The war boom was over. The cancellation of war orders threw millions out of work across the country. Industrial activity in

Pittsfield slowed down. Wages dropped, and labor everywhere was restive. Several nation-wide strikes were threatening—in steel and coal, and on the railroads.

The employees and management of the local General Electric plant were in dispute less on the fact that men were being laid off than on the manner in which this was being done. A strike was called. A month later the men agreed to return to work on the company's terms, but a thousand or more were turned away from the plant because there was no work for them to do. To spread employment, the company reduced the work week from fifty to forty-five hours and introduced the five-day week, closing the plant on Saturdays.

Seeking better pay and shorter hours, the telephone operators organized in New England for the first time. At a strike call, seventy-two walked out and set up a picket line around the telephone exchange, a not unpleasing sight, for Pittsfield had previously known the "hello girls" only by their voices, now finding many of the operators very pretty indeed. There was a prolonged strike on the trolley lines, almost as inconvenient and exasperating as the trolley breakdown in the winter two years before.

Around the country, as the strike movement spread, there was great official hysteria and many raids resulting in the arrest of thousands of alleged "socialists," "anarchists," and "Bolsheviks." It seemed to some that the country was about to run up the Red flag instead of turning for leadership, as it soon did, to Warren Gamaliel Harding and the GOP Old Guard, led by its acknowledged "field marshal," almost a Pittsfieldian himself, United States Senator W. Murray Crane, of Dalton.

The city election in December 1918, a significant one, was very close and bitterly contested. For the first time, Pittsfield had a labor candidate for mayor, David L. Kevlin, who ran on a combined Labor-Democratic ticket against the Republican incumbent, Mayor Moulton. The latter campaigned on the issue that he had cut the city debt by \$350,000 during the war years by his financial "rest-cure" policy. Kevlin talked about jobs, relief for the unemployed, and related matters.



To the surprise of many and the consternation of a few, the labor candidate almost won the election, losing by only a few hundred votes. Though accused of "socialism" and worse, he carried the majority of the wards. He was defeated, as the phrase went, by the "solid South"—Wards 3, 4, and 5. Kevlin and his chief aides soon left the Pittsfield scene because, it is said, they were starved out; no one would give them a job.

Early relieved as one of the units that had done its full share of duty, having served a hundred days in the front lines, Company F sailed from France on the *Mt. Vernon* late in March 1919, arriving in Boston on April 4 and proceeding to Camp Devens. Since becoming a part of the 104th Infantry in August 1917, it had had on its rolls 464 enlisted men and thirty-three officers, including ten company commanders. Two officers and thirty-six men had been killed in action or died in service; 157 had been wounded or gassed; two had been taken as prisoners.

Pittsfield men now were only a minority in the company, the majority being replacements from California and the South. But the Pittsfield men remained a united group, and the city sent a special committee to Boston to greet them as they docked. What did they most want? the committee asked.

"Next to seeing our families and friends," they said, "apple pie and ice cream."

While waiting at Camp Devens to be discharged, they were granted a 72-hour leave to visit Pittsfield. An advance welcoming committee went to Springfield to meet their train, carrying plenty of apple pie and ice cream. As the train approached Pittsfield on the morning of April 7, 1919, every siren, factory whistle, and church bell in the city announced the soldiers' coming. It had been raining, but just before the train arrived, the sun came out to make it a beautiful spring day—and one of the happiest that many had known for some time.

The huge crowd at the station wildly cheered the returning men as they stepped on the platform—just thirty-nine of them in this party. Of the original company of 144, many had been transferred to other units; sixteen had been killed in action; three times that many bore scars of battle.

## WORLD WAR I YEARS

In the most impressive parade the city had ever seen, with flags flying and bands playing, the Company F men marched up West Street to the Park, up North Street and down Summer Street to the Armory, with an honor escort that stretched out for blocks. In line were Civil War and Spanish War veterans, the mayor and city officials, the clergy, Company K of the State Guard, members of the Board of Trade, the officials and the band of the General Electric plant, the Salvation Army, the drum corps of the Eaton, Crane and Pike Company, a police platoon, several hundred Red Cross workers led by the Pittsfield Military Band, and many sailors from the Fleet. In the sailors' front rank marched a local woman, Mrs. Wheaton (Elizabeth Weston) Byers, a Navy yeo(wo)man during the war.

At the Armory, a large luncheon had been set for the occasion, with the usual number of speeches on the menu. But the guests of honor, for the most part, chose not to stay for either the food or the oratory, being naturally eager to be off to the privacy of home and family.

Mustered out on April 28, with all of its members receiving a year's furlough, Company F never saw active service again under its proud name, becoming Company I of the 104th Infantry in 1920, under the military reorganization plan of that year.

The local Home Guard Company saw brief service in September 1919, when Governor Calvin Coolidge summoned them to Boston to help preserve order during the police strike there. The company was billeted in the "Cradle of Liberty," old Faneuil Hall, where the signal had been given to the "Indians" who staged the historic Boston Tea Party, prelude to the Revolution. After some uneventful patrol duty, the company was back in Pittsfield on October 9 and immediately discharged.

Meantime, in the summer of 1919, the 301st Ambulance Company, originally Ambulance Company #13 of the Berkshire County Red Cross, had returned home after almost a year in Europe. Under the command of Captain (Doctor) Melvin H. Walker of Pittsfield, it had served behind the battlefronts in



Europe and with the American occupation troops in Germany. Three of its men had died in service, none of them from Pittsfield.

During the war, another more or less local military unit had been formed as part of the National Army—the 390th Field Artillery. With Colonel William H. Eaton of Pittsfield in command, the regiment established its headquarters in the city, being perhaps the first regiment to do so in Pittsfield's history. It was officered entirely by men from Berkshire County and Springfield. Though well trained, the 390th did not see service in France.

After the war, in 1922, a coat of arms for the regiment was officially approved. It bore part of the coat of arms of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, for whom Pittsfield was named, and a blue band bearing a "gold cross potent" representing the arms of the town's first minister, "Fighting Parson" Thomas Allen of Revolutionary War fame. The motto on the coat was "Steadfast"—a good and inspiring motto at any time.

In May 1919, several thousand veterans met in St. Louis and organized the American Legion. Jay C. Rosenfeld of Pittsfield had attended this meeting and upon his return home with a report, fifteen local servicemen met in the Armory and decided to request a charter for a local Legion post, naming two pro-tem officers—William H. Eaton as commander and Reginald M. Ames as secretary.

A charter was quickly granted and on August 6, 1919, Pittsfield Post #68 held in the Armory its first regular meeting, electing Dr. Harry J. Tate as commander, Alexander C. Jasper-son as vice commander, Jay C. Rosenfeld as adjutant, and Charles F. Reid as finance officer. Fifty-seven new members were admitted at this meeting, and within a few years membership totalled 600 or more. Post #68 continued to meet at the Armory till 1920 when it secured rooms in the Lloyd Block on North Street, which remained its headquarters for thirty years.

During the war, Pittsfield had dealt with its own concerns as best it could. It carried forward the program, started in 1916,

of reforesting the slopes from which it drew its water supply, planting them with white pine, red pine, and Norway spruce. South Street got some pavement at last, as far as Housatonic Street. Most of the old horse blocks along the main streets were removed as pedestrian hazards. More sidewalks were laid. The Council passed a measure placing a ceiling on the city tax rate, limiting it—what optimism!—to \$15 a thousand. The rate at the time stood at \$23.50. The mayor got a pay boost from \$1,000 to \$1,800 a year, effective in 1920.

It had long been usual on the morning of St. Patrick's Day to find a green flag flying from the pole on top of the Pittsfield High School building, presumably put there during the night by boys of St. Joseph's High School. Before someone could break his neck, the authorities took down the flagpole in 1917, ending the old tradition.

Early in 1918, a new hospital had been established, St. Luke's; the old William Russell Allen mansion on East Street was converted for the purpose. Previously, in 1916, a group from Pittsfield and the county had formed the Berkshire County Society for the Care of Crippled and Deformed Children, with Dr. Henry Colt of Pittsfield as president. In 1917, through the generosity of Mrs. Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge and Mrs. W. Murray Crane of Dalton, the Society conducted a summer camp for crippled children near the historic Sprague Cottage on West Street, overlooking Onota Lake. Pleased with the work, Mrs. Coolidge gave \$50,000 to endow it permanently.

A few months later, in 1918, she transferred to the Society her beautiful estate known as Upway Field. On its forty acres stood not only the Sprague Cottage but a large modern house, which became the Berkshire County School for Crippled Children. Mrs. Coolidge gave an additional endowment of \$150,000 for its support. To this was added a sizeable trust fund left to the institution by Senator W. Murray Crane upon his death in 1920.

At the same time, Mrs. Coolidge, a woman of wide interests and many talents, presented the first in the now world-famous series of chamber music concerts on South Mountain, off lower



South Street. The initial concert on September 16, 1918, was attended by more than 400 persons, many of whom were celebrated musicians, composers, and conductors. Special trolleys were run from Park Square to the stop on South Street, where a fleet of automobiles was waiting to carry visitors up the mountain to the Temple of Music, a large and simple structure well adapted to its purpose. The seats were pews brought from an old church in Nashua, New Hampshire.

The first concert opened with a Beethoven work played by the Berkshire String Quartet, which Mrs. Coolidge had organized in 1916 to play with her, and for her and her guests, at her West Street house, which she gave at this time as a home for crippled children. The second number was a quartet in E Minor by Alois Rieser, who had won the \$1,000 award offered by Mrs. Coolidge for the best original composition for string quartet. Eighty-two scores had been submitted to the distinguished jury that made the award.

A composer herself, Mrs. Coolidge was always tremendously interested in encouraging new talent. The first concert closed with a work for piano and strings, with Mrs. Coolidge at the piano, for she was an accomplished musician, having once been a concert pianist. This initial Berkshire Festival of Chamber Music concluded with concerts the next afternoon and evening.

Few in Pittsfield ever did more for its well-being and fame than Mrs. Coolidge, who came with her husband and family to live here in 1908. She gave generously to aid the sick and unfortunate. Her contributions to its musical life and that of the nation have long been gratefully acknowledged, for as was once said of her, she added to the "fine art of the composer and the fine art of the performer, the fine art of paying the bill."

The Fourth of July in 1919, the first since the Armistice, was one of the city's larger and happier celebrations. After a sunrise salute, there was a long colorful parade, followed by a mid-day dinner for hundreds of recently returned veterans. In the afternoon, thousands attended the ceremonies as Mayor Moulton dedicated Clapp Park, a ten-acre tract given to the city by former Mayor Allen H. Bagg in memory of his wife's father and

grandfather, Edwin and Jason Clapp, builders of fine coaches and carriages, who had their large shop on what is now Clapp Avenue.

But the big event of the day was Pittsfield's first real "aviation demonstration," staged by a barnstormer, L. Victor Beau, in his Curtiss biplane. Using the Allen farm on Dalton Road as a flying field, Beau took up Mayor Moulton and other notables. Thrilled with their first view of the Berkshires from on high, they were most enthusiastic about flying, declaring that Pittsfield should build an air field immediately as it was "likely to be on one of the great air routes from Boston to Seattle."

As thousands craned their necks skyward, Beau did the loop-the-loop and other stunts, skimmed so low over Pontoosuc Lake that he almost hit the boats, then came roaring down North Street, just above the trolley wires, "at a speed of more than 100 miles an hour!"

It was "a great treat," all agreed, and the city expected several more days of flying. But the aviator ran into a fence post and damaged his machine. Even worse luck dogged him. On his way back to Long Island, he cracked up along the Hudson and his plane burned, so that this pioneering air enterprise in Pittsfield was not profitable to the barnstormer, however much the city may have enjoyed it. Flying enterprises have never much prospered in Pittsfield, though the city has long had an airport.

A few days before the Fourth, there had been another great celebration, not so general, but spirited enough—on June 30, 1919, the day before the saloons were to close under a temporary prohibition measure decreed by President Wilson. It was to remain in effect until demobilization was completed. But as the 18th amendment had already been ratified—Massachusetts had been the eleventh state to agree, on the grounds that "national prohibition would prohibit"—it seemed that Americans would never quaff beer or "red eye" again, and there were many mourners, eager to drown their sorrow at the sad parting.

On the first day of the drought, the local police reported of the night before that it had been "fairly quiet," though the drugstores noted an extraordinary run on buttermilk as an an-



tidote and "solace." Pittsfield, according to the local press, "is now as dry as the Sahara." But a few days later, in the first arrests under prohibition, three men were locked up for ten days for being drunk on Jamaica ginger.

Invited by local temperance groups, William Jennings Bryan, former Secretary of State and many times a candidate for the White House, came to talk in behalf of the Anti-Saloon League's drive for 2,000,000 members. Speaking at the First Methodist Church, which was "comfortably filled," Bryan declared that passage of the prohibition amendment represented "the greatest moral victory in history." America was rid of demon rum for all time. Prohibition "would sweep the world," he concluded, as local White Ribboners applauded.

Flushed with victory, the WCTU and affiliated groups started a drive against another evil, enlisting many in Pittsfield. Confidently predicting victory within five years, they began campaigning for a 19th amendment—to prohibit the use of tobacco.

Other moral matters agitated Pittsfield. Sunday sports, even amateur sports, were still banned by state law, under old Puritan statutes that prohibited not only pleasure but all work on the Sabbath. In 1917, the legislature relaxed this a bit, making it legal for people to work on Sundays in their war gardens, which did not please everybody.

Among the more vehement local critics was the Reverend Janeway Gordon of Westminster Chapel, who, speaking at the First Congregational Church, castigated the "moral laxity" of the times. A few months previously, it so happened, a heavy and unseasonably early frost had severely damaged the war gardens in Pittsfield and throughout Massachusetts, which was all the proof required, said the speaker, of God's wrath against "Sabbath desecrators."

To others, women's clothes were a matter of mounting concern. Younger women were charged with "carrying war economy to an extreme," in their skirts and especially in their bathing suits. The latter still consisted of a high bodice, skirts to the knees, stockings and shoes below, with little bare skin showing. Even so, Chief of Police Sullivan did not like the trend, an-

nouncing that if any women appeared "indecent" on local beaches, they would be ordered "in to get some clothes on." Nor did the Chief like the latest dances. He closed down a dance pavilion at Pontoosuc Lake when he found some young people there doing the "shimmy."

Though 1919 was not generally a prosperous year, Pittsfield continued to expand. General Electric enlarged its local plant with a \$250,000 building, and the Berkshire Woolen added a large warehouse. Inspired by the Board of Trade, recently reorganized and renamed the Chamber of Commerce, the Pittsfield Industrial Development Company was formed, having as its first objective the buying of a large part of the extensive Allen farm on Dalton Road, another old Pittsfield landmark that disappeared during these years.

The farm had been established in the 1880s by William Russell Allen, great-grandson of "Fighting Parson" Allen and son of the Thomas Allen who had given Pittsfield the Berkshire Athenaeum building, among other benefactions. Born in St. Louis and settling in Pittsfield in 1871, William Russell Allen built himself a large house on East Street, later used by St. Luke's Hospital. A wealthy man, Allen devoted himself to horse breeding, being an officer in the National Trotting Association and a president of the American Association of Horse Breeders.

In 1886, he established his stable off Dalton Road on a 1,250-acre farm, entered through a large stone arch that still stands. Here he laid out a private racetrack to put his trotters through their paces and erected a huge barn, said to be the largest in Massachusetts. Built of Canadian spruce, the barn stood seventy feet to the ridgepole, was 100 feet wide and 210 feet long, having sixty box stalls, steam-heated and partitioned with glass. Round about stood thirty buildings—smaller barns, tenant houses for a working force of thirty, hay and sulky sheds, blacksmith shops, foaling sheds, and a large indoor track for winter training.

Allen's celebrated stallion, Kremlin, was the champion trotter in 1892 and sired a talented breed. One of his descendants,



Baden, won more prize money than any other trotter in 1912, being subsequently sold to the Czar of Russia. The following year, trotters born and bred at the Allen farm made more records and won more prize money than those from any other farm in the country. Kremlin was still living on the Allen farm, aged twenty-nine, when his owner died on September 2, 1916.

After Allen's death, his stable—121 horses, in all—was sold in New York. Two years later, the great barn was torn down. Most of the farm was divided up and sold as small building lots, in a development called Allen Heights. One of the streets in Pittsfield was named Kremlin for the one-time lord of all these acres. In 1952, with anti-Communist hysteria at its height, the people along the street had its name changed to Lillian.

Part of the Allen farm lay along the Boston and Albany railroad, offering many good factory sites. For \$70,000, the Pittsfield Industrial Development Company bought this portion of the farm—264 acres—for the purpose of holding it intact for future industrial development. The corporation soon sold fifty-eight acres of it to General Electric, which used part of it for making industrial porcelain and other insulating materials, constructing a large building along what was first known as Ceramic Avenue, now Plastics Avenue.

At this time, bringing more "foreign capital" into the city, the Tillotson textile company was bought by a New York firm headed by General George W. Goethals, engineer-builder of the Panama Canal. The latter announced that the mills would be kept running full time. Other mills in the city were running near capacity.

With the General Electric plant expanding and smaller local industries at least holding their own, Pittsfield entered the 1920s in a hopeful mood, notwithstanding some clouds gathering on the business horizon.

The preceding decade, in spite of the dislocations of the war, had been one of substantial growth. From 1910 to 1920, the city's population had increased from 32,121 to 41,751—an in-

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crease of 30 per cent, three times the rate of growth for Massachusetts as a whole, and more than four times that for Berkshire County.



## *Pittsfield in the Twenties*

THE NINETEEN TWENTIES are firmly lodged in the popular fancy as the "Dizzy Decade"—gay, gaudy, and militantly unconventional. Certainly, the period marked a swift and sharp change in the social, moral, and intellectual climate of the nation, in the whole tone and manner of American life. Old taboos suddenly lost their mystic power, and there was gleeful slaughter of many a "sacred cow."

It was the day of "free love," of the speakeasy, of the often-caricatured young flapper with her long cigarette-holder and her knee-length skirts, and her "sophisticated" boy friend in a raccoon coat, always with a silver flask on his hip to keep the blues away.

"Drinking among the young is the big problem," Pittsfield's probation officer observed after two years of prohibition. "A new crop of high-voltage liquor consumers has come forth."

Bootlegging became a highly organized and profitable racket, with open bloody warfare between rival gangs. With moonshine stills and alcohol plants running full blast, the price of hard liquor in Pittsfield, according to the local press, fell rapidly from \$15 to \$2 a gallon, though old-timers cannot recall ever buying it that cheaply.

In the early Twenties, Pittsfield had a complex liquor, "love nest," and "robbery" scandal that had the community by the ears for months. A North Street jeweler, Philip E. Schwarz, reported the disappearance of \$140,000 of diamonds on consign-

ment to him from a business friend, a New York jeweler, who was visiting the city. Police investigation of the Schwarz store failed to reveal the diamonds or any clue as to how they might have been stolen.

Pursuing their inquiries, the police made interesting discoveries. They found that in Schwarz' private office on the second floor of his store there was a secret stair leading to a luxurious room on the third floor, a "Throne Room," which was a revelation. At one end was a "royal" chair on a dais, with a canopy overhead. On the carpet which stretched from wall to wall were two polar bear rugs. The furniture included a large handsome lounge and a day bed. There were artificial flowers hanging from a richly decorated ceiling. Heavy brocade curtains covered the walls and also the windows, so that no light could get in—or out.

Schwarz modestly described this secret chamber as his "rest room." In it the police found a large cache of bonded whisky, a violation of the prohibition law. A week after the "robbery," while making another thorough search of the premises, the police found the missing diamonds in a bag stuffed behind a steam pipe in the basement, evidently just "planted" there. "An inside job," Chief of Police Sullivan had declared from the start. Tried for larceny, Schwarz was acquitted.

But with all its "flaming youth" and assorted giddiness, the period was also one of high creative activity of profound significance—in science and technology, in philosophy, in education, and in all the arts from music to architecture. Shaking off the last of foreign ideological shackles, tired of imported concepts and standards of little relevance, the country took a fresh look at American life in all its aspects. It was a day of discovery, of radical new departures. Our "modern" America dates from the Twenties.

Politically, however, the country went back to Old Guard conservatism—"back to normalcy," as it was phrased by Warren Gamaliel Harding, who overwhelmingly won the presidential election in 1920. Harding and the Republicans routed the Democratic ticket on which the vice-presidential candidate



was a young Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who was soon stricken by polio and forced into retirement for some years. But he would be heard of "again and again and again."

Pittsfield followed the campaign with special interest. The Republican vice-presidential candidate, Calvin Coolidge, governor of Massachusetts, was well known in Pittsfield. Long a leader in nearby Northampton, he was regarded as almost a son of Berkshire, especially as he was a mountain man himself, having been born in the neighboring hills of Vermont.

The city also followed closely the campaign activities of the two powerful Massachusetts senators, Henry Cabot Lodge and W. Murray Crane. Lodge had posed the major issue of the campaign in leading the attack on the Versailles peace treaty and the covenant of the League of Nations negotiated by President Wilson.

The other senator, W. Murray Crane, of neighboring Dalton, was considered by Pittsfield as almost one of its own, for he had many financial ties and other interests in the city. It was Crane, the acknowledged "field marshal of the GOP Old Guard," who was responsible in large part for securing Harding's nomination as a compromise candidate at the Republican convention. Dying at Dalton on October 2, 1920, Senator Crane did not live to see the triumph of the Old Guard and his own triumph as a "king maker." To mourn the passing of an old friend, Pittsfield flew its flags at half mast.

In the 1920 election, as in 1916, the tiny Berkshire town of New Ashford, aided by the *Eagle* staff of Pittsfield, again made national and international headlines, being the first precinct to report its complete presidential returns—this time, by 7:38 a.m., with the poll revealing 28 votes for Harding, 6 for Cox. Again, as in 1916, Pittsfield followed New Ashford in giving the Republican candidates a sizeable margin, by a majority of three to two.

In the election, for the first time in Pittsfield, women voted, enfranchised by the woman suffrage amendment which had just been ratified. Exercising their new freedom and responsibility,

## PITTSFIELD IN THE TWENTIES

the women turned out in large numbers to cast their ballots. Even the most critical males had to admit, however reluctantly, that they "voted like experienced veterans, causing little congestion or delay at the polls."

In the city elections a month later, Pittsfield took another step along the "emancipation" road, electing its first woman to public office. Ward 5 chose Mrs. Clark J. (Clara) Harding to represent it on the School Committee. Two years later, she was joined on the Committee by Mrs. Jennie S. Pierce, from Ward 4. Both were re-elected when their four-year terms expired.

Gay and gaudy as the later Twenties may have been, the opening years of the decade were grim and grey for millions. In Pittsfield, as throughout the country, many war veterans returned to find there were no jobs for them. By the end of 1920, a short but sharp depression was tightening its grip on the country, and most of the world as well. Revolutionary uprisings threatened abroad. Long bread lines formed in our larger cities and industrial centers. Many farmers were going bankrupt, dragging down the whole economy. Between planting and harvest in 1920, farm prices fell from a third to a half.

But retail prices resisted the downward trend, leading to loud protests against "gouging" and "profiteering." To investigate and control the local situation, Mayor Merchant appointed a Fair Price Committee. But as the committee consisted largely of merchants and other businessmen, it did little but agree that prices should be "fair."

A former president of the United States, William Howard Taft, soon to become Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, joined the outcry against the "high cost of living," especially against the high prices of clothes. As Taft was a tall man of extraordinary girth, his remarks led a local editor to comment, with an eye on the Berkshire scene, that "when a man the size of William H. Taft threatens to take to denim clothes, the woolen manufacturers should sit up and take notice."\*

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\*On one occasion, when on his way to attend an event at Williams College, Taft stopped in Pittsfield at a local clothier's to buy a formal black bow tie, having forgotten to bring one with him. Getting a tie long enough to go around his collar presented quite a problem, which was finally solved by sewing together two standard black bow ties.



Not only those dealing in woollens, but manufacturers and merchants in all fields, sat up with a start and took notice when the bottom suddenly dropped out of the market. Pittsfield stores were filled with "bargains," with few takers. Most people could not afford to buy. This forced more bankruptcies and unemployment, wider distress, and still lower prices as the downward spiral continued.

For want of orders, the General Electric plant in Pittsfield was operating at half capacity. Several woolen mills closed down, while the others ran their spindles and looms only part time. On Christmas Eve in 1920, the mills gave their employees a rude shock by announcing that wages would be cut 22.5 per cent effective immediately. Workers protested by going on strike, but won no concessions. Unemployment rose steadily throughout the country until almost 5,000,000 were out of work, with other millions working only part time. Pay cuts finally reached the executives and office workers in the local General Electric plant, who had their salaries reduced 10 per cent.

In the summer of 1921, in a phrase he almost exactly repeated when president ten years later, Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover in the new Harding administration confidently asserted, "The worst phase of the business depression is over . . . We have already turned the corner." In Pittsfield, certainly, the corner had not been turned, as the Board of Overseers of the Poor declared.

According to their report: "The [local] industrial situation became very bad in October 1920, and continued all through 1921, becoming very acute when the cold weather set in. Many families that had always been self-supporting have been obliged to apply to the city for aid. The fact that coal still sells at war prices, although wages for common labor have been reduced 50 per cent, has been a very great hardship to many families."

Local social service agencies and relief organizations did the best they could with their limited resources to help provide the needy with food, fuel, clothes, and a roof to shelter them. Holding the still fashionable notion that if a man really wanted to

work, there was work to be had, the Chamber of Commerce set up an employment bureau. So did the city administration and the American Legion.

What was obviously needed was not more employment agencies, but steady work that paid something more than occasional odd jobs here and there.

The city, county, and state, aided by Federal funds, embarked upon a road-building program to take up part of the slack in employment. The Pittsfield-Albany road was improved by the construction of a new concrete highway from West Pittsfield over Lebanon Mountain to the New York line, a vastly better road than the old one, though it was often impassable for months at a time.

Under the practice of the day the state built and maintained the chief cross-country highways. But it left the responsibility for keeping them open during the winter to the townships and communities through which they passed. Many towns were too small and poor to do much about this.

Pittsfield was handicapped by the fact that the neighboring town of Hancock, for example, had the responsibility for keeping the highway over Lebanon Mountain cleared of ice and snow. The expense was too high for the town.

Besides, the town center was not on this highway, but on another road some five miles to the north. As few of its people ever used the Lebanon Mountain road, Hancock was not much concerned about it. In consequence, the road over the mountain was frequently blocked by snow and ice for long periods, as was the Mohawk Trail and the road to Springfield over Jacob's Ladder.

More and more people began to protest that it was not good business "to build a road at a cost of \$20,000 or more a mile and then let it lie idle for weeks at a time when a few dollars would make it passable." Finally, in 1922, the county commissioners agreed to provide a few snow plows, an innovation that would have been "unthinkable and unpopular" a few years earlier.



Even with the plows, the situation did not immediately improve. In 1923, the Pittsfield-Albany road over Lebanon Mountain and the Pittsfield-Springfield road over Jacob's Ladder were blocked for three months—from New Year's Day to March 25. In the previous winter, they had been snow-bound almost as long. The clearing and removal of snow also presented major difficulties in towns and cities. Wise motorists of the day, especially in the high and hilly Berkshires, put their cars away at the first sign of snow and left them up on blocks in the garage till spring came.

In the winter of 1926-27, through a series of heavy blizzards, the arterial highways around Pittsfield were kept open for the first time with scarcely any interruption of traffic. The city had just bought its first large snow-loader, which did the work of a hundred men. The next winter, the state took over the snow and ice problem on main routes, to the considerable relief of counties, towns, motorists in general, and the growing number of long-distance truckers.

The local press reported rumors that trucks were being built "to give speeds in excess of 30 miles an hour . . . Ordinary users of highways may soon be warned to watch out as a truck wants to pass them." One wonders if this prophet is still alive to see and tremble as great trailer-trucks go thundering by at 70 miles an hour, threatening to sweep all out of the way, giving the ordinary motorist the feeling that he is just standing still on the road.

With the war intervening, little had been done about Pittsfield's "deplorable" streets since 1916. In 1921, partly to relieve unemployment, Mayor Michael W. ("Doc") Flynn, a practicing dentist, recommended a paving policy that would add a few permanent improvements each year.

Under this program, paving was laid around Park Square for the first time, and extended out East Street to Elm, and along Elm Street to Newell. This pleased the mud-wallowing inhabitants of the rapidly growing southeastern section of the city, though some complained that water was frequently very high along lower Elm Street—so high that they had seen

## PITTSFIELD IN THE TWENTIES

muskrats paddling along there, evidently just looking for a place to build a home.

The pavement on South Street was extended for a few blocks. New West Street was paved to a point beyond the overhead railroad bridge. Tyler Street and Dalton Avenue were hard-surfaced from Woodlawn Avenue to Benedict Road. Almost the entire length of First Street was paved, from East to Tyler streets, with the aim of diverting some traffic from congested North Street.

With traffic accidents mounting, many ascribed the maiming and "slaughter of the innocents" to the fact that many more women were driving, now that cars were equipped with self-starters. Women were not as good drivers as men, it was alleged.

Chief of Police Sullivan did not subscribe to this view. But he had noted, he said, that when milady put on her finery and got behind the wheel of a "nice car" for a tour along crowded North Street, she was less concerned about the weaving traffic than "watching the sidewalks for friends, and enemies."

In 1922, Chief Sullivan bought six movable semaphore standards for better control of traffic. Equipped with red and green lamps for night use, these were set up in the center of main intersections. In summer, each was shaded by a large green umbrella, and the Chief won for his men a major concession. In hot weather, they no longer had to wear heavy blue jackets buttoned up to their chins. They could appear in light flannel shirts, "color grey, single breasted."

In the summer of 1925, Pittsfield installed its first traffic lights, just four of them in the center of the city—at South Street and East Housatonic and West Housatonic Streets, at the corner of West Street and North Street, on North Street at Fenn Street, and on Fenn Street at First Street. Pronounced "satisfactory" after a trial, a few more were installed the next year. But come winter, they were turned off, from December 31 to May 1, the amount of traffic during those months evidently not justifying their cost in electricity.



Chief of Police Sullivan had his own ideas about traffic control, as about most things. Pedestrians had their rights, to be sure. But in the crowded business section, they should not be allowed to cross the streets at main intersections. They should cross in the middle of the block, in well-marked pedestrian lanes and under strict police control—which would require, of course, more patrolmen.

The Chief admitted that he had “often heard second-hand remarks from some businessmen and property owners” that the cost of the Police Department was already much too high. Sullivan had no patience with this view.

“Police is the foundation of Government,” he declared, taking sharp aim at his critics. “The cost of a policeman means nothing. One act of a policeman saves his year’s salary. Yea, his entire life’s salary . . . When a new firm or corporation wants to locate in your city, the first question asked the Mayor is, ‘Mr. Mayor, what kind of a Police Department have you got?’ ”

And who were these critics with their “second-hand remarks”? They professed to have Pittsfield’s best interests at heart, but “many do not show the proper spirit, to prove it.” Too many of the North Street business people left their cars parked every which way for hours at a time, “using our main street as a garage.” Merchants along the street were loading and unloading goods at the front door, across the sidewalks, interfering with “the Pedestrian,” the merchant’s best friend. Nor did these merchants take much pride in their street.

“It is almost impossible,” the Chief declared, “but the officers do get the merchants to shovel off the snow and ice from their sidewalks. But in summer, you have seen it, the sidewalk littered with papers and dust, especially Sunday mornings. The time has now arrived in Pittsfield, when some of our businessmen have got to change their methods.”

Sullivan was rather pleased with himself and his record. In an annual report at this time he pointed out that the city had had “no serious crimes, no breaks, no hold-ups, no assaults against person, liquor and gaming kept at a minimum, fires

discovered, alarms rung in, ninety-eight per cent of people missing located, only eleven automobiles stolen from thousands on your streets and all recovered except one, traffic scientifically handled, auto accidents cut down, the care of an entire sleeping city at night, quick replies to eleven hundred letters from different parts of the world . . . .

"I know I am right when I say to you, Mr. and Mrs. Tax-Payer, that you have received dollar for dollar spent by me in service rendered to you by your Police Department."

During 1920, with a force of thirty-eight partolmen, the department made 1,161 arrests, including one for what was termed the "Chastity Act," seven for the "Illegitimate Child Act," five for walking on the railroad track, thirty-six for burglary, fifty-two for violation of the liquor laws, 133 for traffic violations, and 263 for drunkenness.

A teetotaler himself, Chief Sullivan was an ardent supporter of prohibition, though he confessed that enforcement gave him aggravating troubles. It was very difficult to get evidence sufficient to convict bootleggers. But worse than the bootleggers were the respectable people who patronized them.

These people had to "make up their minds to obey the law," the Chief thundered. "Public opinion must not sit on the fence. It has to get off and it will as liquor is a curse and right and principle is with Dry Enforcement."

Those patronizing bootleggers or making booze at home were corrupting both the community and their own families, said Sullivan, who in 1924 reported "more stills than ever in private homes." This led to juvenile delinquency and worse things, one of which simply had to stop—the "petting parties" that went on in cars parked without lights along out-of-the-way streets and lonely roads. Any "neckers" found in dark cars parked anywhere, even if well off the road or in private driveways, were to be arrested for violating the automobile light laws. It is not recorded how many were caught with their ardor on and their lights off.

Even during post-war depression years, Pittsfield continued to grow. Its population increased almost 10 per cent from 1920



to 1925. As little new construction had occurred during or since the war, this created an acute housing shortage.

Initiating a trend that gradually transformed the city, most new construction consisted of single houses, which began to replace the older multiple-family "tenements," usually of wood and primitive in their conveniences. But this trend made it increasingly difficult to find rooms and houses for rent. Buying the Beech Grove Inn in 1920, the Eaton, Crane and Pike Company made it into a boarding house with living quarters and club rooms for its women employees.

Sabbath "desecrators" won wider latitude in 1920 when the state lifted the prohibition against amateur sports on Sundays. Aware of deep-seated prejudices in some quarters, the Park Commission approached the problem gingerly, deciding to try amateur Sunday baseball at Wahconah and Clapp parks, and at the Pontoosuc and Pitt playgrounds. Every Sunday during the season, baseball games were played on these grounds, "and everything proceeded in an orderly manner," with no violent popular explosions, or flashes of lightning from on High, or early unseasonable frosts to kill the crops. The commission expanded its program, recommending more field houses, tennis courts, and wading pools, especially more facilities for skating, coasting, and other winter sports.

Establishing an institution that later became an annual event, Pittsfield staged a Winter Carnival early in 1922, the first in the Berkshires. Prizes were offered for skating and traditional winter sports, and arrangements had been made to introduce skiing, "a novelty in the sports line in this section." A ski-jumping exhibition was promised, along with a big parade on the opening day. Unfortunately, the high spirit of the Carnival was dampened when, at the last minute, everything had to be called off "because of rain." Staged the next week, there was no ski-jumping for want of snow—an increasingly frequent want in recent years.

In the skating contests, Pittsfield oldsters more than held their own, skating rings around their juniors. The prize for

men's fancy skating went to "Joe" Durwin, aged 52. The five-mile race was won by Archibald Mosier, aged 47.

Curiously, both were blacksmiths, a vanishing trade, though there was still some horse-and-buggy business to be done. The "horseless carriage" was rapidly taking over Pittsfield's streets, but there yet remained in the center of the city a large livery stable—Sweener's, on Summer Street—with thirty-five horses for hire.

Also in 1922, establishing another institution now part of the city's life, Pittsfield held its first community Halloween party. The idea, said the sponsors, was to keep the young from tearing the town apart on the night before All Saints' Day and allow their elders "to forget such vexations as the scarcity of coal, high taxes, and the tariff."

With the stores all lighted and almost everybody in costume, there was a big parade on North Street, with youngsters of twelve and above placed up front, just behind the band, trailed by other groups and scores of floats. North Street was jammed from the Park up to Charles Street as a crowd of 50,000 watched the "most weird, fantastic, and gorgeous parade" the city had ever seen.

Everybody agreed that it was "some party," and the community Halloween has since become traditional, growing ever more elaborate. In more recent years, General Electric workers spend hours of their free time making for the occasion huge self-propelled dragons and other monsters to delight young and old alike.

Innovations were made in other fields during these years. A major change in the city's educational system occurred in 1920 with the introduction of junior high schools. Under the new system, there were six grades in the elementary schools, three in the junior high schools, and three in the senior high school. Eight elementary schools—Dawes, Mercer, Plunkett, Pomeroy, Crane, Redfield, Russell, and Tucker—were transformed into junior high schools by February 1921, under the direction of a new superintendent of schools, John F. Gannon.



He was appointed early in 1920, coming to Pittsfield from Worcester, where he had been assistant superintendent.

The high school building on the Common, though not so old, presented many problems. It was "out of repair, out of date, overcrowded, utterly inadequate," declared Superintendent Gannon in one of his first annual reports. To help relieve congestion, the high school had been split in 1920. Part of it, the Commercial Department, was established as the Pittsfield High School of Commerce and moved to the Read School nearby.

This and the establishment of the junior high schools considerably reduced the number of students in the main building. Even so, it was still so crowded that classes had to be held in the corridors and the basement. Whether to expand the old building or construct a new and larger high school was a subject of lively debate—a question not to be resolved for some years.

The introduction of junior high schools was not the only innovation made in local pedagogy at this time. In 1921, Superintendent Gannon notified all school principals that "in the future, no strap, whip, or rubber hose [!] shall be used in whipping a pupil. A light rattan applied to the palm of the hands should suffice."

Revolutionary developments had occurred in other fields. For some years, under the direction of Frank W. Peek, Jr., one of its brilliant engineers, the local General Electric plant had been conducting high-voltage research and experiments. On June 5, 1923, a distinguished group was invited to the High Voltage Laboratory at Morningside to witness a demonstration of "man-made lightning"—a great blinding spark of 2,000,000 volts—"controlled by a mere touch."

Of general and scientific interest around the world, the event was covered by the press wire services and the reporters of many American and foreign newspapers. One of the best accounts, praised by General Electric officials as "accurately descriptive . . . journalism of the first rank," was written by a local reporter, a member of the *Eagle* staff, Alexander Smith, a graduate of the Pittsfield High School.

## PITTSFIELD IN THE TWENTIES

It was so good that it was preserved in a published volume, an international roundup entitled *The Best News Stories of 1923*, competing with such "hot" items as the wreck of the Twentieth Century Limited, the Japanese earthquake, the Dempsey-Firpo fight, Mrs. Belmont on marriage, the rise of Leon Trotsky, Russia's Red Army (still hot), and "Wallie" Reid's last moving picture.

Though business remained rather slow, there were signs of returning prosperity in 1923 when the local textile mills gave their employees a pay raise, a substantial increase of 12.5 per cent, a partial restoration of heavy pay cuts made after the war. The three Tillotson mills, which had been closed, were running again, having been restored to local ownership and control late in 1922, when they were bought from the Goethals company of New York by James R. Savery, Denis T. Noonan, and W. V. E. Terhune, principal stockholders and directors of the local Berkshire Woolen Company. Operating the Tillotson Company as a separate unit under its old name, the new owners announced their hope of soon employing 700 or more workers.

Production and employment at the General Electric plant increased when orders were received for large transformers to be installed in Alabama and North Carolina, and in Japan, which had been devastated by one of the worst earthquakes in modern history. More than 175 carloads of transformers left Pittsfield for shipment to Japan. The plant supplied 1,000 electric fans for the world's largest ship, the American *Leviathan*, formerly the German *Vaterland*. Its volume of business increasing, the Eaton, Crane and Pike Company, with about 1,000 on its Pittsfield payroll, opened more sales offices and warehouses in cities across the country.

The revival of the local building industry provided an increasing number of jobs. In 1923, the Berkshire Loan and Trust Company moved into a new marble building it had built on North Street. A handsome new church on Fenn Street, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, was dedicated in 1924. The General Electric plant enlarged its facilities for building and testing transformers. The residential sections of the city began to ex-



pand again, principally toward the northeast and southeast, as new houses went up. Though some special economic problems of a local and regional character remained, most of the slack in employment had been taken up in Pittsfield by the end of 1924.

One of the city's well-known citizens was "lost" at this time—the postmaster, Clifford H. Dickson, long prominent in the political and fraternal life of the city. He had been tax collector for seven years, a member of the School Committee, a State representative, a treasurer of the Republican City Committee, an active churchman, and a high official in the Elks Lodge.

On the morning of September 2, 1922, just as two inspectors arrived for a routine check of local postal affairs, Dickson walked out of his office as if he intended to be gone only a few minutes on some business in town. That evening he chanced to be seen on the streets of New York City by two young Pittsfield women. This caused no comment until several days later when Dickson had failed to return and no word from him had come either to his office or to his worried wife, who had the care of five children.

Their suspicions aroused, the postal inspectors began a close check and found Dickson's papers in great disorder. This came as a shock to the community, for Dickson had always been known as a meticulously methodical man. Untangling Dickson's scrambled accounts as best they could, the postal inspectors reported that he had absconded with at least \$16,642, and perhaps more. Postal sleuths were immediately put on his trail.

Meantime, Dickson had simply vanished. No clue or trace of him was found since his reported presence in New York on the evening of the day he walked quietly out of his office in Pittsfield. A nation-wide search was made for him. He became, in a sense, the most photographed man in the city's history, for in all post offices and other public buildings from coast to coast his picture was posted among those "Wanted." Still, nothing came of all this. Not a clue was turned up—nothing.

The mystery might have lasted forever. But in 1927, after five years of wandering, Dickson decided to surrender, giving

himself up in Fort Smith, Arkansas. Brought back to Massachusetts, he pleaded guilty and was given three years in prison.

Dickson declined to talk about his wanderings except to say that he had been in the Southwest. He added laconically that he had not used the money taken from the post office, that he had not spent any of it on himself. This may have been so.

Some evidence at his trial suggested that the funds stolen from the post office had been used to cover an unexplained deficit of almost the same amount which had been found in the city tax collector's office soon after Dickson had left it. If so, he had been juggling public moneys for some time.

In the summer of 1923, upon the sudden death of President Harding, Pittsfield decreed an official mourning, flying all flags at half-mast. But the city and the Berkshires in general felt confidence in the future as an old friend and neighbor moved into the White House—Vice President Calvin Coolidge. The new president steered a discreet course in the gathering storms about the great scandals in the Harding administration which were just coming to light. But the scandals did not touch Coolidge, and his popularity grew as the 1924 election approached.

In that national election, as in 1916 and 1920, neighboring New Ashford again led the country in being the first precinct to report its complete presidential returns—20 votes for Coolidge, 4 for Davis, none for LaFollette. Pittsfield, Berkshire County, and Massachusetts also gave Coolidge overwhelming majorities, being proud of him as an adopted son.

Massachusetts voters had also been called upon to vote on three proposals—ratification of a Federal constitutional amendment to prohibit child labor, adoption of daylight-saving time during the spring and summer months, and the levy of a 2 cents tax on every gallon of gasoline to finance an improved highway program.

Pittsfield, Berkshire County, and Massachusetts voted against the child labor amendment. Not because they favored child labor, but rather because they opposed Federal "interference" in the field, for Massachusetts already had one of the best state child labor codes.



Pittsfield, Berkshire County, and Massachusetts voted against the gasoline tax, leaving the state one of five not having such a levy. Pittsfield and Berkshire County voted against daylight-saving time. But the majority in Massachusetts favored it, and daylight-saving time has since been a state institution.

The overwhelming victory of Coolidge and the conservatives seemed a good omen to the business community as it shook off the post-war depression. Ironically, this conservative triumph touched off one of the wildest speculative booms of history. The election marked the beginning of the great bull market in Wall Street that sent stock prices soaring to fantastic heights, only to have them suddenly blow up and fall with a crash that shook the country to its foundations.

It was the day of giant mergers, of great holding companies, of high dividends in cash and in stock as "melons" were cut—and many proved to be "melons" indeed. Capitalizations were pyramided upon capitalizations. The nation was flooded with "wild cat" stocks representing little but the fanciful flights of get-rich-quick promoters. Almost any properly engraved stock certificate could be sold and resold and sold again at great profit. The sky was the limit for paper values.

"Confidence" was the watch-word of the day. With optimism rampant, Pittsfield adjusted itself to the "new prosperity" that, in a classic phrase, promised "two cars in every garage and two chickens in every pot." The local Internal Revenue office declared on the basis of income tax returns that many in Pittsfield were "playing the market," as many as one out of every four or five of those in the income tax brackets. At the height of the boom, Pittsfield had eight brokerage offices, several with board rooms, all busily trading in stocks and bonds.

But underneath the speculation and stock-jobbing and unprincipled frauds, solid work went forward. The country was expanding its economic base, multiplying its industrial facilities, lifting its general living standards. In most fields, it was a time of full employment and rapidly rising wages, not only in terms of dollars, but of real wages—i.e., purchasing power.

## PITTSFIELD IN THE TWENTIES

The national income reached \$90 billions in 1926, an increase of more than 40 per cent within five years. On July 1, 1927, the Federal government closed its books on the most prosperous year in its history. The Treasury reported—believe it or not—a \$640,000,000 surplus!

Pittsfield reflected the general air of prosperity. Large orders came to the General Electric plant—among others, for a 66,667 kva transformer for use in Buffalo, New York, the largest transformer yet built in the country, and for Leland Stanford University in California testing equipment to supply 2,000,000 volts, the highest 60-cycle voltage so far produced.

Facilities for building and testing transformers were enlarged. In May 1925, a dial telephone system for intra-plant communication was installed, the first dial telephones in the city. Land for further plant expansion was acquired in 1927 with the purchase of ninety-two adjacent acres from the Pittsfield Industrial Development Company. About four more acres were added two years later, bringing the total area of the plant close to 250 acres.

The company continued its high voltage research and its experiments with man-made lightning, releasing a 3,600,000-volt flash in 1928. The next year, it released a mighty bolt of 5,000,000 volts, the thunderous crack of which was heard round the world by radio hook-up.

Pittsfield had been "on the air" for the first time on March 20, 1926, when the local chapter of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers, holding its annual banquet at the Hotel Wendell, arranged to have the proceedings broadcast from Station WGY of the General Electric in Schenectady, by means of three leased wires from that city. The evening was enlivened by music offered by the Kilowatt Orchestra, composed largely of electrical engineers at the local General Electric plant. The head of the plant, Cummings C. Chesney, national president of the AIEE that year, made a talk.

Those present were pleased that on Pittsfield's first broadcast such a good program was going out. What they did not know until later was that listeners heard scarcely anything of the



broadcast. A sudden SOS call from a distressed ship somewhere in the Atlantic forced Station WGY to cut the program off the air for most of its allotted time.

Previously, in 1916, the bankers of Berkshire County, assembled at the Wendell Hotel for a banquet, had gathered round to listen to the first transcontinental telephone call from the city. It was a memorable occasion, made more memorable by the opening question, "How's the weather out there in San Francisco?" Some of those listening in Pittsfield swore that they could hear the swish of the Pacific Ocean—though it may merely have been a loose connection.

In 1924, the Hotel Wendell had greatly increased its accommodations by building along South Street an addition containing sixty-five rooms, a new ballroom, and a solarium. In 1926, the Berkshire County Savings Bank constructed an addition to its already sizeable building at the corner of North Street and the Park. The Pittsfield National Bank became the Pittsfield National Bank and Trust Company in 1927, paying in that year its usual dividend of 7 per cent, plus an extra "prosperity" dividend of 1 per cent. In 1929, this bank merged with the Third National Bank to become the Pittsfield-Third National Bank and Trust Company, with combined assets of \$6,640,000, having its quarters in the Berkshire Life Insurance building.

In 1929, as a sign of the times and a symbol of the future, the Grand Union chain-store grocery company bought the North Street store of W. H. Cooley, the oldest grocery firm in the city, known for generations throughout the Berkshires for its fancy and staple wares. Other chain-store systems were eyeing the city as a field for operation.

Since the Armistice, the city had been discussing the question of erecting a proper memorial to its sons—and daughters—who had served in World War I, especially to those who had lost their lives in the war.

In 1922, Mayor Flynn appointed a special committee to consider the matter. The committee recommended the building of a quite elaborate war memorial on East Street, between Wendell and Bartlett avenues. In the center was to be a memorial flag

staff, erected by public subscription. It was to be flanked by two large buildings—a new and badly-needed city hall on one side, and an ample municipal auditorium on the other—to be paid for largely by the taxpayers.

As times were bad, with money tight, nothing came of this proposal. Pittsfield still needs a new city hall and a municipal auditorium.

The proposed memorial began to take more tangible form in 1923 when a committee of fifteen, with Harry G. West as chairman, suggested building a suitable monument on the South Street Common, where the high school had once stood.

In recommending this site, the committee had the advice of a distinguished friend and neighbor, Daniel Chester French, the celebrated sculptor of Stockbridge. The City Council approved the recommendation and set apart the land as Memorial Park. It appropriated for the memorial the sum of \$21,350, which had just been received as a refund on the excess taxes raised by the state to pay the soldiers' bonus. The Chamber of Commerce led a campaign to raise other necessary funds for the memorial, setting its goal at \$40,000. Altogether, almost \$43,000 was subscribed, with school children contributing \$5,260.

On the recommendation of Daniel Chester French, the memorial committee chose a distinguished sculptor to design and execute a fitting monument—Augustus Lukeman, a resident of Stockbridge, best known for his great Stone Mountain Memorial in Georgia to the generals of the Confederacy. Pittsfield had reason to be pleased with the choice of Lukeman, who gave the city a simple and noble monument—a group of martial figures with a symbolic figure of the Goddess of War above them, holding aloft a spray of laurel in token of victory and bearing in triumph on her shield the severed head of Hatred, the cause of war.

On July 8, 1926, with impressive ceremony, the Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial was unveiled and dedicated. Under the marshal of the day, Colonel William H. Eaton, commanding officer of Pittsfield's own reserve regiment, the 390th Field Artillery, there was a long and colorful parade through the main streets,



with more than 2,000 marchers and five bands in line. A crowd of 25,000 attended the unveiling of the monument which, as the inscription at its base reads, was the city's "tribute to the loyalty and sacrifice of her sons and daughters who [in 1917-18] gloriously defended the liberties won by their fathers."

Judge John C. Crosby, a former mayor of Pittsfield, now a member of the Massachusetts Supreme Court, presided at the ceremony. After the invocation by the Reverend Vincent G. Burns, pastor of the South Congregational Church and an artillery officer in the war, the monument was unveiled by the city's oldest Civil War veteran, Commodore William F. Hunt, who had fought under Admiral Farragut at Mobile Bay and been cited for bravery in the action there. A member of the War Memorial Committee, Charles W. Power, then presented the memorial, which was accepted in behalf of the city by Mayor Fred T. Francis.

Then came the principal speakers of the day—the United States Attorney General, a native of neighboring Vermont, John G. Sargent, sent by President Coolidge as his personal representative; Governor Alvan T. Fuller of Massachusetts; and the Reverend George S. L. Connor, formerly of St. Joseph's in Pittsfield and wartime chaplain of the 104th Infantry, of which the city's honored Company F was a part.

Led by Commander Frank E. Crippen, the American Legion post, with other veterans' organizations participating, conducted the dedication of the monument, which was blessed by the post's chaplain, the Reverend Leo E. Laviolette of Notre Dame Church. The ceremony concluded with the blowing of "taps" for those who had died in the war, and the placing of wreaths and flowers. In 1928, a tall steel flagpole was erected to complete the Memorial.

Pittsfield dedicated another memorial park in 1926, the Zenas Crane Memorial Park, a roughly triangular plot of several acres in front of the Union Station on West Street, a few blocks down from Park Square. Occupied by dilapidated buildings, the plot had been an eyesore for years. In 1923, Daniel England bought it, with the purpose of holding it off the market until

it was decided what to do about this shabby entrance to the city for those arriving by train.

The municipality soon purchased the plot for \$22,500, the price England had paid for it, and spent some \$12,000 to improve it, deciding to name it for the deceased Zenas Crane, of Dalton, one of Pittsfield's staunchest friends and more generous benefactors.

The naming was especially appropriate because Crane, as a director of the Boston and Albany Railroad, had been instrumental in obtaining for Pittsfield an ample new Union Station, built in 1914 at a cost of \$400,000. The commemorative boulder in the park, with a bronze plaque set into it, was given by those—160 of them—who had worked with Crane or under him at the Bay State paper mill in Dalton. Beside the boulder they planted a Pittsfield elm as an additional tribute to their friend.

Prosperity brought more church building. Under the Reverend M. Stephen James, the First Methodist Church on Fenn Street was so thoroughly remodeled and redecorated that it was rededicated on March 22, 1925, with Bishop Adna Wright Leonard preaching the dedicatory sermon.

In 1926, the First Baptist congregation sold its church and property on North Street for \$145,000, and began building its present large church on South Street, at the corner of Church Street. Completed in 1930, Georgian Colonial in style, the church was already under construction when it was discovered that the plans made no provision for an absolute essential of a Baptist church—a baptistry. As a consequence, the plans had to be altered to make room for this. The chancel was shortened several feet, which produced, as a pastor of the church noted, "an appearance of stubbiness in the chancel itself, and in the sanctuary as a whole."

In 1927, the First Church of Christ, Scientist, moved from South Street to a new church on Wendell Avenue, near East Street, built at a cost of \$135,000.

Across Wendell Avenue, almost opposite this church, was built a courthouse annex, or Hall of Records, to provide more space for county offices. The main building, completed in 1871,



had become intolerably overcrowded. Financed by a \$175,000 bond issue, the new two-storied structure of yellowish brick was dedicated in 1928, and into it was moved the registry of deeds, the county treasury, and the district court of central Berkshire. A "bridge of sighs" connects the two county buildings.

Pittsfield's facilities for caring for the sick were greatly expanded in 1926 with the opening of the new \$400,000 St. Luke's Hospital on East Street, a large five-storied brick structure. Conducted by the Sisters of Providence, the new hospital incorporated the best of modern design and equipment. The former St. Luke's hospital, the old Allen mansion adjoining on East Street, became the home of the nuns.

With a bequest of \$150,000 from Z. Marshall Crane, of Dalton, son of Zenas Crane who had founded the club, a large new building was added to the Boys' Club to provide a swimming pool, an auditorium, and many additional facilities.

Contrary to the general expansive pattern, school construction lagged, creating a serious problem in view of a growing population and a rising birth rate. A new Pontoosuc School was completed in 1920, and the Hibbard School in 1924. A third story was added to Tucker School in 1926. With that, permanent school construction ended for the decade.

In many schools, pupils were so numerous that they had to attend in two shifts. To help remedy this, the city resorted to the expedient of providing temporary "portable" schoolhouses—at Plunkett and Stearnsville schools in 1925, at Dawes School in 1927, and at Bartlett, Hibbard, and Crane schools in 1929. These temporary structures left much to be desired, especially in regard to heat and ventilation during typical Berkshire winters. Most of the older school buildings were sadly in need of painting and repair.

The overcrowding in the high school remained serious, becoming more acute than ever in 1928 when the high school annex in the old Read School, the Pittsfield High School of Commerce, was abolished. The students there were moved back to the main building on the Common, necessitating the introduction of a two-platoon system.

One platoon attended classes from eight in the morning to 12:30; the second, from 12:45 to 5:15 in the afternoon. Pittsfield was still debating whether to enlarge the old building, construct a new one, or do nothing in the matter. The city at length decided in 1928 to attack seriously the many tangled problems involved in providing a new \$1,000,000 high school.

During the late Twenties, with the improvement of roads and automobiles and the increasingly wide adoption of the five-day work week, tourism in general and the long roaming weekend in particular became national pastimes, the base of a major industry. More and more people came to motor through the Berkshires and enjoy the "Purple Hills," staying in Pittsfield and other communities overnight or for longer periods. In 1928, the Berkshire Hills Conference estimated that resort and recreational property in the area represented an investment of \$22,000,000, making it one of the largest of Berkshire industries.

Partly influenced by its many visitors, especially by its gay "summer people," Pittsfield was becoming "very metropolitan," it was noted. Most people approved of this, though feelings were mixed.

"Today," wrote a reporter in the summer of 1928, "a bare-legged maiden paraded down North Street, as boldly as you please." Accentuating her bareness, she was wearing bright green shoes, bright green ankle-length socks, a short tan skirt that "responded sensitively to the playful breeze," and a tight and well-modeled sweater of tan and bright green.

A "pretty sight," the reporter admitted, but somewhat daring perhaps, for such costumes had hitherto been confined to summer camps and "other obscure places." The bare-legged maiden was allowed to go her way unmolested, suffering nothing more than some masculine growls, many hard feminine stares, and a few exclamatory whistles.

Times had certainly changed, even since the previous summer, when Chief of Police Sullivan had gone into the lobby of a respectable hotel and arrested four young women for appearing in public with their stockings rolled below the knees and



their bloomers rolled above, warning that Pittsfield would not tolerate bare knees or "any of that stuff."

With the approach of the 1928 presidential election, Pittsfield was deeply stirred by the campaign. It was one of the bitterest in our history, with the "Great Engineer," Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, matched against the "Happy Warrior," Governor Alfred E. ("Al") Smith of New York.

As a Roman Catholic and an outspoken opponent of national prohibition, Smith was subjected to the most violent abuse and the nastiest clandestine gossip, inspired in large part by the forces behind the Anti-Saloon League and the anti-Catholic, anti-Negro, anti-Jewish, and anti-foreigner Ku Klux Klan.

After the war, the Klan had experienced a great resurgence, capturing political control in many states, not only in the South, but in the North and West. Its membership and influence were declining in 1928, but it was still a power in many communities.

There was a Klan in Pittsfield which occasionally made announcements as "Berkshire Klan, No. 9," with no names signed. The local press castigated the Klan, and most people in Pittsfield applauded when a prominent citizen, Thomas F. Cassidy, formerly a state senator, publicly attacked it as the "menace of the moron."

Though a few crosses were burned in the city as a warning to "undesirables," the local "nightshirts" were not much in evidence, and Pittsfield was spared the violent clashes between Klansmen and their opponents such as occurred elsewhere in the state—notably, at Lancaster, Haverhill, and Shrewsbury.

As the 1928 campaign proceeded, a new political catch-all phrase, which some still find useful, began to appear frequently in the press and on the platform. Governor Smith favored public power development, liberal farm relief, labor's right to collective bargaining, and state control and sale of liquor. Hoover and the Republicans denounced these policies as "state socialism."

But Pittsfield was not much impressed, and when the Governor's train passed slowly through the city during the campaign, some 15,000 people—the largest political demonstration

up to then in Pittsfield's history—gathered at the station and along the tracks to cheer “good old Al” as he stood on the back platform waving his familiar brown derby, which the more fashionable found repulsive, absolutely abhorrent. A brown derby in the White House! they snorted, finding another reason to blast Smith.

For the fourth time neighboring New Ashford was the first precinct in the country to report its complete presidential returns—by 6:26 a.m., less than a half hour after the polls opened. By private radio established on the spot, the *Eagle* flashed the news to the world—28 votes for Hoover, 3 for Smith. Pittsfield and Massachusetts did not follow New Ashford in this, both giving Smith a majority. Indeed, Massachusetts was one of the two states outside of the South—the other was Rhode Island—that voted for Smith, who even lost much of the Solid South.

Hoover's election released another wave of speculation and sent the already inflated stock market soaring to new heights. Two weeks after the election, with buying orders flooding in, Wall Street had its “wildest market day in history.”

The Pittsfield office of Western Union announced plans for installing new stock-ticker machines twice as fast as the old, so that local people could keep up with the market. General Electric stock went up \$11 a share in a day. The quoted value of the company's shares had quadrupled since 1921. GE was paying extra dividends, which profited many officials and workers in the local plant, as well as many investors in Pittsfield.

The city entered 1929 with the greatest confidence. The General Electric plant was humming. More large orders for transformers and capacitors came in. The lightning arrester and voltage regulator sales headquarters of General Electric were moved to Pittsfield. By the summer of 1929, the plant was employing 8,000 people, an increase of 1,500 within a year. Other local businesses and industries were flourishing.

The future looked golden, like a dream—and dream it was. Within twenty years, by 1950, so experts advised, Pittsfield



would be a city of 90,000 and should begin planning accordingly.

Plans were drawn for a big new hotel, the Longfellow, to be built on South Street, at the corner of West Housatonic. There was talk of enlarging the Maplewood Hotel, and of adding four stories to the Park Hotel, now the Allen. The feeling in Pittsfield was general that "our biggest, brightest, and best days are just ahead."

But underneath the glittering surface there were ominous rumblings, as there had been for some time. Not all had shared in the booming prosperity of the late Twenties. Agriculture and textiles remained two depressed industries, never having fully recovered from their post-war slump. With incomes steadily declining, farmers were restless as their financial troubles grew progressively worse. Rural banks throughout the country began to fail. A widening and ever more dangerous gap opened between commodity prices and soaring security prices. While industrial production continued to increase, so did unemployment. Bread lines began to form in many cities.

The New England textile industry had been particularly hard hit, faced as it was with sharp and growing competition from the South, to which many of its cotton and woolen mills had moved.

The textile depression adversely affected Pittsfield. In the summer of 1925, with the general boom well under way, the Berkshire woolen mills cut wages 10 per cent, which precipitated a strike with about 3,000 people involved. The mill workers in Pittsfield and neighboring communities organized, affiliating their locals with the national organization of United Textile Workers. The issues of the strike went to arbitration. The decision was against the strikers, who returned to work at reduced wages, and their union broke up.

But wage reductions did not solve the local problems. In March 1927 the Taconic and the Bel Air mills suspended operations, throwing several hundred out of work. After being idle for some time, the Pontoosuc mills began operating again in 1928 under new owners, L. Bachman and Company of New

York, who renamed the plant the Pascoag Woolen Mills. For the first time in 103 years Pittsfield was without a Pontoosuc mill.

Late in 1928, the Kinney Worsted plant, which had been closed for four months, reopened as the Elmvale Worsted Company, organized by Bertram W. Spencer, Walter N. Cooper, and Carey R. Kinney, all local men. Other textile mills, notably those of the Berkshire Woolen and the Rice Silk company, were operating at or near capacity. But unemployment in the city was increasing.

Then came the great stock market crash of October and November 1929, with reverberations felt around the world. Within a few weeks, the value of stocks fell more than 30 billions, wiping out the margins of small investors. All stocks, even the best, suffered in the calamitous decline. Brokerage houses began to go to the wall, unable to meet their obligations.

Pittsfield shared the impression throughout the country that nothing very serious had happened. The crash had merely shaken "speculators" out of the market. Fundamentally, the economy was "sound." The only thing needed was a return of "confidence." With that, things would go on much as before. Few realized that the Good Old Days were gone forever, that the country was on the eve of profound change in its institutional patterns and habits of thinking, brought about by one of the great peaceful revolutions in history.

Pittsfield had emerged from the vicissitudes of the Twenties with the feeling, phrased by Mayor Jay P. Barnes, that it had been, "on the whole, a decade of achievement."

Between 1920 and 1930, the city's population had increased from 41,751 to 49,578—a growth of almost 25 per cent, one of the highest rates of growth in Massachusetts and all of New England.

The General Electric plant had been expanding and in 1929 enjoyed the busiest year in its history, employing more workers than ever. Many substantial orders were on hand to assure continued high employment for some months.



While most of the local textile mills were in difficulties, the Chamber of Commerce and the Pittsfield Industrial Development Company were striving to bring new industries to Pittsfield to increase the city's weekly payroll. Local merchants, bankers, and businessmen in general agreed that 1930 should be almost, if not quite, as active and bustling as 1929, an opinion shared by Chief of Police Sullivan.

"With regard to the New Year," said the Chief, showing himself a shrewder prophet than most, "I expect it to be bigger and better than ever, from a police angle."

## VII

# *Pittsfield in the Great Depression* *First Phase: 1930-1933*

ANOTHER MILESTONE, THE YEAR 1930 marked the tercentenary of the founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The world had greatly changed, New England especially, since the day three hundred years before when Governor John Winthrop had put in at Salem with the first large Puritan company, soon founding Boston.\*

Winthrop and his associates had brought with them the Great Charter under which, from the start, Massachusetts asserted its right to self-government. As they interpreted the charter, a reading to which the Crown never agreed, these men denied the right of the English Parliament to legislate for the colony and, adopting the dangerous "heresy" of the Pilgrims, set up a church of their own. They utterly repudiated the official Church of England to which under the law all subjects had to belong under penalty of fines, imprisonment, or even hanging for failure to conform. The Pilgrims and the Puritans contributed as much as any, and more than most, to America's tradition of dissent and its deep passion for temporal and spiritual independence.

Pittsfield celebrated the tercentenary with an elaborate pageant at Wahconah Park. Thousands attended as a cast of

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\*The Pilgrims had founded Plymouth in 1620, ten years before the Winthrop company arrived. But Plymouth was a separate and distinct colony, remaining so down to 1692 when it was absorbed, much against its will, by the Massachusetts colony.



five hundred presented, in costumes of the day, a number of colorful scenes from the history of the community, back to the day of its founding.

Previously, as part of the observance, an engraving of William Pitt had been presented to the city by Robert T. Francis, a well-known painter of New York who had been born in Pittsfield. Placed in City Hall, the engraving was a copy of the original oil done from life by Richard Brompton, a painting which hangs in the Tate, Britain's national art gallery.

But the city, at the moment, was less interested in the past than in the troubled present and cloudy future. The stock market crash was not affecting speculators alone. All business was falling off. Unemployment rose rapidly as factories slowed down. More and more small banks closed their doors. The crash was not the cause of this, merely the barometer registering grave disorders in the economy. Many businessmen were still optimistic, saying that the trouble was only "in the head"—merely psychological—a matter of "confidence."

"Face the facts," warned Roger Babson and other business experts, "instead of glossing over the situation with Pollyanna stories about how good trade is." Early in 1930 trade was already 10 per cent below the year before, and falling fast. The stock market continued to tumble.

In Pittsfield, the onset of the Great Depression was not felt as sharply as in most communities for several reasons. The General Electric plant, for one thing, had many large orders on hand, which slowed down the layoff of workers. Also, it undertook considerable construction, erecting a new \$50,000 transformer building, a \$27,000 nitrogen-oxygen gas plant, and a \$1,000,000 transformer tank shop. Contemplating a five-year expansion program, it started the largest excavation job in Pittsfield's history, levelling and grading a large part of the old Allen Farm it had bought for future development.

Other construction went forward. The telephone company erected a new \$1,250,000 office building and exchange at the corner of Wendell Avenue Extension and Federal Street, and began installing dial telephones. The Agricultural National

Bank spent \$400,000 in improving and enlarging its building on North Street. The post office was enlarged with a \$135,000 marble addition. Some work was done in restoring the Peace Party House. The Pittsfield Country Club spent \$25,000 in making its golf course "less tiring." All of this kept men at work.

The city provided the largest building project. After years of delay and repetitious debate, Pittsfield had finally decided in the flush days of 1929 that it could afford a large new high school building. Almost all agreed, but the choice of site aroused lively controversy.

Having considered and rejected other possible sites, the Committee on the New High School made the recommendation, and the authorities approved, that it should be built on East Street a few blocks down from Park Square, at the corner of Appleton Avenue. This was a convenient central location, certainly. But it meant the destruction of three of Pittsfield's oldest, finest, and most historic houses.

The most renowned of these was the Plunkett House, formerly and better known as the Longfellow House, still earlier as the Gold-Appleton House. Built as a farmhouse in 1790, it had been bought in 1800 by Thomas Gold, a prosperous lawyer, later the first president of the Agricultural Bank. Gold added to the farmhouse and transformed it into a spacious and handsome mansion. Upon his death it went to his daughter, the wife of Nathan Appleton, a Brahmin and rich merchant of Boston. It was here that Henry Wadsworth Longfellow came in 1840 in pursuit of the Appleton's daughter, Frances, who became the poet's wife.

Though Longfellow never lived permanently in the house, he often spent long visits there, lovingly describing it as an "old-fashioned country seat" sitting on a wooded knoll "somewhat back from the village street." On the landing of the stairs in the large central hall stood a tall grandfather clock, the inspiration of the poet's "Old Clock on the Stairs."

The second of the doomed houses stood next to the Plunkett House. Large and well-designed, it dated back to 1820 when



Thomas Gold had built it for his son. The third house had been built in 1881 by James W. Hull, for many years president of the Berkshire Life Insurance Company.

The owner-occupants of the houses publicly voiced objections to losing their homes, and there were many in the city who felt that the old houses should be preserved for their historic value, pointing out that the neighborhood offered other convenient sites for the high school.

If their voices could have been heard, none would have been louder in protest than the children of the neighborhood. For generations, the slopes of the Plunkett House knoll had been their favorite winter playground. Here, when snow and ice came, they went sliding, sitting in a pie tin or using the seat of their pants, though some preferred going down headfirst in a belly-flopper.

Individual protests and rather wide public criticism were of no avail, being brushed aside with some impatience. In retrospect it would seem that the authorities might have been not quite so dogmatic in deciding that the site chosen, and only that site, would serve. In any case, the old houses came down and steamshovels began levelling the knoll.

Early in 1930, on a cold March day, the students of the high school marched two abreast from the old building on the Common down First Street and out East Street to the corner at Appleton Avenue, where they laid the cornerstone of their new \$1,300,000 building. Though construction was delayed somewhat by a series of strikes, the building was completed in good time, a large and attractive four-storied brick structure with a white tower, "erected by the City of Pittsfield," reads the inscription in the lobby, "that her youth may here acquire the knowledge which makes for larger life."

At the opening of the school year in 1931, almost 1,500 students came to classes in the building to enjoy there a new sense of space with plenty of light and air. Unfortunately, it became apparent within a few years that the new building was not large enough, that it had already been outgrown in some respects. The auditorium could not seat all of the students, so that school

assemblies had to be held in two sections. The old building on the Common became the Central Junior High School.

As the year 1930 wore on, the unemployment situation in the city became progressively worse. The General Electric plant reduced its working schedules. The Tillotson mills closed down, throwing three hundred or more out of work. Other local industries were operating only part time. Those fortunate enough to have jobs had their wages cut, and then cut again. As cash customers declined and credit accounts went unpaid, many small and even some larger retail stores went bankrupt.

The city saw the last of regular professional baseball for some time in the summer of 1930 when the local club in the Eastern League collapsed in mid-season, followed by the clubs at Hartford, Providence, and New Haven, leaving only four teams in the league to finish the schedule. Once the pride of Pittsfield, having their home grounds at Wahconah Park, the "Hillies" had won the Eastern League pennant in 1919 and 1921, and down the years had usually been a strong contender.

As hunger increased, men turned in desperation to chopping wood to earn a few dollars, or selling apples on street corners to make a few cents. Some who had always been respectable took up the shady business of bootlegging. A few turned to petty thievery, burglary, and armed holdups. The police blotter in the old lock-up showed a marked increase in crimes and misdemeanors.

To aid the "considerable number" of unemployed, the city filled in and graded Wahconah Park at a cost of \$25,000, giving work to almost 1,300 men in three-day shifts. It appropriated \$95,000 to extend the water mains, beginning this project immediately even though it was winter with deep frost still in the ground. This was not an economical procedure, but it provided work for the needy and represented a permanent improvement, far more desirable in all respects than paying out money for home relief.

In the winter time, several hundred found work harvesting ice on Pittsfield's ponds and lakes. Snow removal provided temporary jobs from time to time. On one occasion in the win-



ter of 1930-31, more than 500 men stormed the City Yards on West Housatonic Street after a heavy snow, all demanding shovels so that they might go to work. As there were jobs for less than a hundred, the rest became "disorderly" in insisting on being put to work. The police had to be called to quiet them and send them unwillingly home to more enforced idleness. Yet in certain circles there were loud repetitions of the stale canard that the unemployed were only those who did not want to work.

Appointed by Mayor Barnes in the fall of 1930, with Colonel William H. Eaton as chairman, an Unemployment Commission opened offices on North Street to register the unemployed and help them find work. With the cooperation of the Chamber of Commerce and the Berkshire Morris Plan Bank, the Commission raised \$40,000 to establish an unemployment fund, which helped to relieve immediate distress in many families. Within a few months, the Commission registered almost 1,300 unemployed. Of these, slightly more than 300 found work, chiefly on odd jobs that lasted only a day or two and paid 50 cents an hour at the most, and usually less.

It was all very well for the Commission to register the unemployed, the president of the City Council pointed out, but the Commission could not create jobs. Only the city could do that, and the authorities felt that it could not afford to do so. Expenditures were rising, especially payments for home relief. These rose from \$42,000 in 1929 to \$182,700 in 1932. At the same time, revenues were falling sharply, with more than \$1,000,000 in taxes unpaid. Interest on bonds to finance the new high school building and other improvements took a large bite out of the budget. The city was steadily running deeper into debt.

Consequently, the Public Works department, which normally employed several hundred men, had to cut its regular working force to fifty or less. There was little money for maintenance of existing facilities and essential services, let alone for improvements and new projects. Appropriations for the department fell from more than \$1,000,000 in 1929 to \$377,000 in 1933. During the icy winter of 1931-32, the coldest in a decade, there was

not even money enough to sand the streets and roads, a cause of many accidents. On more than one occasion, groups of citizens snatched up shovels and did what they could to sand the streets themselves.

When the Public Works department did have some work to offer for snow removal and other occasional jobs, a member of the City Council protested that those certified as being in need were passed over in favor of those who came with "slips" from some politician. He had given out some slips himself, he said, but the emergency was now too serious for that. On one occasion, money to provide employment and even food orders for the hungry were held up for days as the City Council wrangled about the "legality" of transferring unallocated funds for the purpose.

There was a sad want of cooperation and coordination among the various agencies, public and private, that were dealing with employment and relief. This was not peculiar to Pittsfield, but general throughout the country.

It had long been the accepted view, especially in New England, that every community should take care of its own. But neither municipal governments nor local agencies were geared to meet social catastrophe. Faced with unprecedented demands and myriads of new complex problems, they floundered, as was to be expected.

They lacked the organization and the trained staff to meet growing imperative needs. They were hampered by want of adequate funds, by want of clear objectives, by want of any basic, coordinated, long-range plan. In a real sense, they operated from day to day, hoping that the clouds would lift tomorrow.

Welfare agencies, public and private, had been largely concerned with the sick and unemployable, whom they handled as individual "cases." Now they were faced with millions of able-bodied people who were not "cases" at all in the ordinary sense—men and women whose only need was an opportunity to work and who desperately wanted some assurance that they and their children would not starve meantime. The relief of mass distress did not fit the old social agency patterns, with the result that



everywhere there was considerable chaos and confusion, misunderstanding and non-understanding.

In 1931, the Pittsfield Community Chest had the local situation studied by two experts—one representing the Association of Community Chests and Councils; the other, the Family Welfare Association of America.

Recommending drastic changes, the experts reported a lack of coordination in handling individual cases, a confusion between handling unemployment cases and those involving standard family welfare work, a want of joint planning by private agencies, public agencies, and local industries in meeting the community problem.

They pointed to the inadequacy of local municipal relief. Compared with most cities of its size, Pittsfield gave very little, they declared. Its aid per person was much below the average.

Mayor Barnes took exception to the report, dismissing the experts as "theorists." The needy were being adequately cared for, he said, though admitting that the Welfare department had been rather "hard-boiled" under Superintendent A. W. Shaw, who had just resigned.

For its part, the Community Chest adopted many of the policy and organization changes recommended by the experts, to the benefit of its member agencies and their clients.

Administration of relief and better enforcement of prohibition became lively political issues with the approach of the city elections in the fall of 1931. Seeking to be re-elected for his third two-year term, Mayor Jay P. Barnes was challenged in the Democratic primaries by Patrick J. ("P.J.") Moore, a prominent lawyer, who had been mayor for two terms almost twenty years before, in 1913 and 1914.

In an unexpected upset, Moore defeated Barnes and went on to win the mayoralty easily. The Democrats also won control of the Board of Aldermen and the Common Council by large majorities. If any believed that this sweeping Democratic victory presaged greater harmony at City Hall, they were much mistaken.

“Economy” was the new mayor’s dictum, which brought him into conflict with the City Council, the police and other municipal employees, the teachers, the growing number of jobless, and various other groups, public and private.

Under the circumstances, conflict was inevitable, for few saw eye to eye on what was real and what was false economy. Certainly, city finances were in a precarious state. A tenth of Pittsfield’s families were on the welfare list. More and more loans had to be made to carry the relief load and meet the weekly city payroll of \$25,000. As the loans piled up and went unpaid, the city found its credit impaired. To borrow money, it was soon compelled to pay 6 per cent interest on short term loans, the highest rate it had ever paid, an unproductive drain on its dwindling revenues.\*

Even with these borrowings, municipal employees in Pittsfield, as in so many communities throughout the land, had many “payless” pay days. At one time they went weeks without a check until the city was in debt to them almost \$200,000.

When neighboring Lenox found itself in a similar predicament, a local newspaperman, an *Eagle* correspondent, came forward and advanced the town \$20,000 to pay its bills. This caused not only a local but a nation-wide sensation, especially among blase’ reporters. They had heard of everything, they said, but a working newspaperman having \$20,000—and in cash, at that.

Mayor Moore cut the budget \$218,660 below the previous year, the largest proportionate cut in Massachusetts, giving Pittsfield the smallest budget for any city of comparable size in the state. The mayor hoped that this drastic cut would, somehow, relieve local unemployment and obviate the necessity of having the city go outside for aid.

The economy drive took many forms. All playground supervisors were discharged, which would have closed the playgrounds if supervisors, largely volunteer, had not been provided by a Citizens’ Playground Committee, with Rabbi Harry Kaplan as chairman. The mayor sharply criticized the buying of eye-

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\*Four years later, it was paying a mere 0.19 per cent interest on short term loans.



glasses and false teeth for veterans on soldiers' relief. To save \$1,000, the traffic lights were turned off for six months, even at such busy and dangerous intersections as North and West streets. It seemed for a time that Pittsfield would be without street lights because its electric bills were so far in arrears.

To save \$1,500, the evening schools were closed, which affected twenty-eight teachers, some of whom were added to the unemployed. Expenditures for school books and janitorial staffs were reduced. No new teaching appointments were made. The use of substitute teachers was held to a minimum, with school principals doing the substituting as they found time.

Teachers and all school employees took a 10 per cent salary cut. The kindergartens were abolished, which aroused loud protest. They had been a part of the school system since 1902, when they had finally been accepted after a long and bitter struggle.

"Why the hullabaloo over the kindergartens?" Mayor Moore asked. They were frills costing \$18,000 a year. Besides, they were and had always been illegal. The School Committee never had any specific authority to establish them.

The secretary of the Chamber of Commerce joined the fray by quoting the Reverend William R. Kelly, of the Catholic School Board of New York, who declared kindergartens a "modern monstrosity." Besides, said the Chamber's secretary, they were hard on the children's eyes. Many interested in education put in a spirited reply, but the kindergartens remained closed.

But all of these economies were minor, and Mayor Moore appointed a committee of local bankers to search the city departments and make recommendations for improvements. After a closed session, the committee made its first recommendation—that the School Committee not rescind its vote to cut teachers' salaries 25 per cent for the remainder of the year, equal to a 10 per cent cut for the year as a whole. Such a cut, they added, should be applied not to the teachers alone but to the whole school department, from the superintendent down.

The bankers' committee then recommended a 10 per cent salary cut for all city employees for the remainder of the year.

The bankers made no recommendation about cutting the unprecedentedly high interest rates that the city had to pay on its loans, some from local banks.

Pittsfield banks, it appeared, were doing very well in spite of the depression. Business in 1932 enabled the Agricultural National to pay a dividend of 16 per cent. In only three years of its long history dating back to 1818 had it paid a higher dividend.

A new Unemployment Commission, with R. H. Gamwell as chairman, was appointed in the summer of 1932 as the crisis grew worse. The Wyandotte and other local mills closed down. The old Russell mills, long a landmark, sold their machinery at public auction. Production at the General Electric plant declined. There was very little building activity. Hundreds of families were losing their homes through inability to keep up their mortgage payments, or their taxes, or both.

Unemployment in the nation had reached more than 12,000,000, with an additional 7,000,000 on part-time jobs. For the most part, public works were at a standstill.

Those out of work were getting restive and resentful, holding huge mass meetings in our larger cities. More than 20,000 gathered on Boston Common to demand work and, meantime, adequate relief. Some 17,000 hungry veterans joined the Bonus March to Washington. With fire and sword, they were driven from the city by the Army at White House orders. Dairy farmers were on strike in the Midwest, overturning and burning milk trucks. As in Shays' Rebellion in western Massachusetts a century and a half before, armed farmers in many sections prevented the courts from sitting so that no more farm mortgages could be foreclosed. More and more banks crashed, ruining their depositors.

As the 1932 presidential election approached, it seemed to many judicious and sober-minded men that America was on the brink of revolution. A number in Pittsfield shared this view,



anticipating a great "social upheaval" if something were not done to check the drift of events.

As their candidate, the Republicans renominated President Herbert Hoover. He and his party had done little to help the states and municipalities with their relief problems, being strongly opposed to direct Federal aid for the unemployed, preferring to work through voluntary associations "to preserve the principle of individual and local responsibility."

If the Democrats won, said Hoover in concluding his campaign, "the grass will grow in the streets of a hundred cities, a thousand towns; the weeds will overrun the fields of millions of farms." Nothing would be left of "the American way of life."

The Democrats nominated Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt of New York. Many dismissed him as an amiable man who would like to be president, little suspecting what he was, or would become.

Some objected to Roosevelt's forthright stand on repeal of the Prohibition Amendment. But there was no reason to suspect any very radical departures in other fields as the candidate followed the Democratic platform in campaigning for a drastic reduction in all Federal expenditures, a balanced budget, and a sound currency, plus some mild reforms of banking and stock exchange practices.

Almost all could agree on that program. Later, there might have been less surprise if more people had taken note of Roosevelt's consistent appeal to the "forgotten man at the bottom of the economic pyramid," and of his words to the Democratic Convention in accepting his nomination:

"I pledge you, I pledge myself, to a new deal for the American people."

As shown in the primaries, Massachusetts Democrats would have preferred Al Smith as the candidate, instructing the Massachusetts delegation to support him.

For the fifth time, and the last to date, the neighboring town of New Ashford was the first to report its complete presidential returns, at 6:28 a.m.—24 votes for Hoover, 8 for Roosevelt.

The Berkshire town of Peru was the second to report, at 8:42 a.m.—37 for Hoover, 23 for Roosevelt.

Roosevelt carried Pittsfield by a narrow margin of 417 votes, and Berkshire County by only 76 votes. But Roosevelt won in forty-two of the states, including Massachusetts, rolling up a total of 472 votes in the electoral college to Hoover's 59.

But instead of getting better, things got rapidly worse during the long four-month interregnum between the election in early November and the inauguration of the new regime in early March—a constitutional fault later corrected by the 20th amendment.

Nervous depositors started a run on the banks, withdrawing or transferring their accounts, so that the whole banking structure threatened to collapse. To stop the panic, state after state declared a "banking holiday"—perhaps good for the banks, but a worry and a pain to depositors, who were denied the use of their own money. They could not withdraw a dime, though the dime was theirs. By inauguration day on March 4, 1933, all banks in the country were on a "holiday," except those in Delaware and North Carolina.

As his first act, President Roosevelt made the bank holiday nation-wide. It was to last at least four days. To keep business running meantime, clearing houses and similar institutions were authorized to issue bank-guaranteed scrip. The Berkshire County Clearing House issued \$8,000,000 of such scrip to tide people over till normal transactions were resumed.

Most of the banks in the Berkshires opened on March 15, with withdrawals limited to \$100, a restriction soon lifted. Of the banks in Pittsfield, all opened on March 15, except the Berkshire Trust Company.

Having many of its assets "frozen" in the form of local real estate loans, the Berkshire Trust was in process of thorough reorganization. All of its former directors resigned or retired. Cummings C. Chesney, head of the local General Electric plant, succeeded Judge Charles L. Hibbard as president; \$125,000 of new capital was subscribed. The bank reopened under restrictions on March 20. A police officer was on hand, but he "had



nothing to do." Six months later, the Berkshire Trust was freed of all restrictions and resumed normal business.

Meantime, in a still unsolved mystery, one of the city's leading citizens disappeared—78-year-old William L. Adam, president of the Berkshire County Savings Bank, a director of the Agricultural National Bank, and a trustee in the Berkshire Trust Company reorganization. On the evening of April 9, 1933, a Sunday, having attended church earlier in the day as was his custom, Adam apparently walked out of his house on West Housatonic Street, and was never seen again. Nor was any trace ever found of him, or his remains. He simply vanished, and no theory ever offered a reasonable conjecture about his fate.

After the bank holiday, new developments came thick and fast. President Roosevelt called a special session of the Congress, which, in the hectic session known as the "Hundred Days," passed a great body of legislation dealing with the banks, industry, agriculture, labor, and unemployment relief. One of the first bills, designed to secure additional revenue, amended the Volstead Act to legalize beer and wine up to 3.2 per cent alcoholic content. All regulatory and control measures were left to the states.

Pittsfield welcomed this. With the city strongly supporting the move, Massachusetts had repealed by a tremendous majority its own prohibition enforcement laws in 1930, leaving enforcement entirely to the Federal government. Almost twenty states had taken similar action. As soon as the new Beer-Wine Revenue Act was signed, more than 800 Pittsfieldians put in hurried orders to the Mohawk Beverage Company to obtain some of the first supply of beer. This became available on April 10, 1933, when the Licensing Board granted fifteen temporary licenses for the sale of beer and wine.

In June, Massachusetts became the eleventh state to ratify the 21st Amendment to the Constitution, which provided for the repeal of the 18th (prohibition) Amendment.

Pittsfield went "wringing wet" in voting 4 to 1 for repeal. Of the Berkshire towns, only Monterey and Florida voted

against repeal. Ratification of the 21st Amendment was soon completed and on December 7, 1933, legal hard liquor went on sale at noon, in the Wendell Hotel, but only to patrons of the dining room, which was "more than full," as were some of the guests. Local package stores reported a "brisk" sale of whisky, gin, and wine.

But the return of John Barleycorn, however welcome to some, did not dispel the general gloom throughout the land as the economic machine remained stalled. It obviously needed repairs and a good push to get it running again.

Over the vehement protests of some who felt that they "owned" the country and alone should say how its business should be run, a number of new "radical" measures for Federal action came from Capitol Hill and the White House.

These included closer supervision of the banks and the stock exchanges, stricter accountability in their use of other people's money, insurance of bank deposits, abandonment of the gold standard as a currency base, farm relief, easier farm credits, re-financing of home mortgage debts, a national employment service, reforestation and related work on public lands by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), private construction of public buildings and other improvements by state and local governments with the financial aid of the Public Works Administration (PWA), locally-sponsored work projects to employ the able-bodied on the welfare lists with funds largely supplied by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), which later evolved into the Works Progress Administration (the much-maligned WPA).

Many of these measures suffered, of necessity, from being hastily improvised to meet the urgencies of an unparalleled crisis. But whatever their defects, they brought a gleam of hope to millions who for years had seen nothing but a blank wall ahead of them and a pauper's grave in the distance. The administration might be wise or unwise in its policies. At least, it promised action, a welcome and wholesome change from the hoary myth that economic "laws" were immutable, even if they



produced social catastrophe, and that there was nothing to do but let nature take its course.

That more mistakes were not made is a tribute less to the administration than to the American people—to their good sense, warm sympathy, spirit of cooperation, organizing ability, and relentless energy.

Opening new avenues, the relief and recovery programs made themselves felt almost immediately in Pittsfield. As its first project under Federal auspices, the city began recruiting its quota for the Civilian Conservation Corps. Reforestation, flood control, prevention of soil erosion, building of roads and trails, and removal of fire hazards from the woods were its chief duties. Single young men aged 18 to 25 were eligible. For their work, they were housed, fed, clothed, and paid \$30 a month, part of which was paid directly to their families if they had any.

The city sent off its first CCC recruits in May 1933, when twenty-five young men marched to the station, without brass bands or other fanfare, to entrain for Camp Devens for induction and preliminary training there under Army officers. As part of the Corps' 127th Company, the city's contingent was soon assigned to building a CCC camp in the Pittsfield State Forest, near Lulu Cascade.

Eight CCC camps were established in the Berkshires within a few months. All of them undertook valuable projects still in use—building roads, bridle paths, hiking trails, ski trails, and ski racing slopes; clearing brush and dead wood; carving out of the forests many public camping sites and picnic areas with open fireplaces, benches, and tables. The local men at the Lulu Cascade camp built a road to beautiful Berry Pond in Hancock, the highest lake in the state, making it readily accessible as it had not been before.

At the same time, Pittsfield employed men on the relief rolls to continue its own project of reforesting the slopes of its watershed. From the start of this project in 1916, it had planted more than a million trees at the almost negligible cost of \$23 a thousand, a small price to pay for improving the always worrisome water supply.

The United States Employment Service, the Federal Farm Relief Emergency Program, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), and other Federal agencies established offices in Pittsfield. That of the Employment Service was immediately swamped with hopeful registrants.

On the day the HOLC office opened, more than a hundred distressed families, some formerly well-to-do, applied for loans to save their homes from being taken by the banks on mortgage foreclosures or being sold by the sheriff for delinquent taxes. Hundreds in the city saved their homes through HOLC, which simultaneously was aiding the banks, relieving them of unprofitable real estate on which the mortgage loans, advanced in boom times, often exceeded the now severely depressed sales value of the properties.

Though disappointed not to get more, Massachusetts received \$2,000,000 as its initial grant from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. Of this, Pittsfield was allotted almost \$60,000, partly for use in direct relief, partly to help finance locally-sponsored projects to provide work for the unemployed.

Such projects had to be approved by the state and regional officials of the Civil Works Administration. CWA funds could be used only to pay wages. The local sponsoring authorities had to provide whatever materials and equipment were required.

Upon this basis and with an additional Federal grant of \$150,000, the city had more than 900 people at work on CWA projects by the end of 1933. They were engaged, for the most part, in improving streets and bridges, extending water and sewer mains, constructing sidewalks, laying drains, clearing and beautifying parks, developing playgrounds, planting and trimming trees.

Other projects were later added, including some of a clerical and professional nature to employ hungry typists, secretaries, social workers, nurses, teachers, musicians, artists, writers, and others with special skills and training. All of these had to eat, too, and liked a roof overhead.

A knitting project for women was established. The work paid \$12 a week, but this seemed a fortune to many. As a con-



sequence, more than two hundred women eagerly sought work on this project which unfortunately offered only thirty-two jobs. Work for women was later expanded and directed to making shirts, trousers, comforters, mattresses, and similar essentials for those on relief. The work was carried on in the empty Victory Mill, one of the old Tillotson mills, the use of which had been offered for the purpose.

The winter of 1933-34 was a very severe one, the coldest and snowiest in many years, and rigorously tested the mettle of those doing outside jobs on work relief.

As the men got paid only when they worked, most of them insisted upon working every day, no matter what the weather. On December 29, 1933, with several feet of snow blanketing Pittsfield and the temperature down to 30 degrees below, seven to eight hundred of them—almost all of the working force—appeared on the job and worked throughout the day.

Yet these were the "loafers" who declined to do anything but "leaf raking," as some in Pittsfield and many elsewhere declared. There was never a grosser libel, never anything more un-American, than the abuse that a few of the more fortunate heaped upon the unemployed, who by this time numbered almost 20,000,000, the largest single group in the country, representing almost every class and condition from coast to coast, a good American cross-section.

The great fiasco of the New Deal came not in work or home relief, but in quite another field—in the much-ballyhooed Blue Eagle campaign of the National Recovery Administration. Directed at business and industry, NRA was designed to establish fair labor practices and stop ruinous price cutting. Employers in every field were to form voluntary associations for the self-regulation of their businesses by adopting fair competition codes, which, when approved in Washington, were to have the force of law, notwithstanding any anti-trust legislation. Among other things, employers were "voluntarily" to raise wages and shorten hours to get the economy out of the doldrums.

The NRA campaign began with great publicity in Pittsfield late in July 1933, when the postmen delivered President Roose-

velt's appeal directly into the hands of employers on instructions from Washington. There was a great rush among storekeepers, banks, offices, factories, and other businesses to obtain and display the official Blue Eagle insignia of the NRA, proof that the displayers were cooperating in the program. A huge NRA parade was organized to stir up enthusiasm.

Wages and employment temporarily rose. The Berkshire Woolen Company gave its workers a 10 per cent raise, partially restoring heavy cuts made before. Other mills raised wages. The General Electric plant granted a 5 per cent increase to its 2,300 workers—less than a third of the number employed four years before. A month later, it added 10 per cent to the wages and salaries of all those earning \$2,500 a year or less.

At the same time, some local firms, both retailers and manufacturers, were cited for violating the state laws on hours and wages. Complaints multiplied that many were not complying with the NRA fair competition codes. The confused experiment in business cooperation ended when the Blue Eagle was brought down and done to death in the celebrated Schechter "sick chicken" case, in which the U. S. Supreme Court declared NRA unconstitutional.

Its demise occasioned little lament. The consensus in Pittsfield and elsewhere was that the act, far from helping the small businessman as it had been designed to do, actually tended to promote monopoly by big business and to raise prices at the expense of the already distressed consumer.

As part of the NRA recovery program, Pittsfield launched a spirited "Buy Now" campaign in the fall of 1933. To attract customers, the stores offered "stupendous" bargains. Merchants and business associations recruited what some called "storm troops"—Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and others—who were sent out to drum up trade by carrying signs, distributing handbills, and punching doorbells. At nine on the appointed morning, all sirens and factory whistles let out a sustained blast to remind everybody in town that shop doors were open and waiting to receive a panting multitude.



But the day was not much of a success in spite of the noise and the offer of many special inducements. For one thing, a *bona fide* shopper (who had a sales slip to prove it) could ride home free on one of the new "square-ended" buses, which had their engines in back and not out in front under a long hood.

By this time, buses had entirely supplanted the street cars which had seemed so wonderful and "modern" not so many years before. In the summer of 1932, the few remaining trolleys, once the "high-toned carriers of the crack Berkshire line," made their last run in Pittsfield, bumping slowly along the rails to Berkshire Park to be burned there.

The pride of the line, the palatial parlor car known as *The Berkshire Hills*, which every summer day for years had offered sightseers an extensive tour of the "Purple Hills" from Great Barrington to Bennington, Vermont, ended up as a lunch wagon on the road to Albany, where it still serves as a roadside diner.

Most of the abandoned car tracks remained in the streets for five or six years until they were taken up and sold as scrap to Japan, which soon threw the steel rails back at us in the form of shells and bombs during World War II.

## VIII

# *Pittsfield in the Great Depression* *Second Phase: 1934-1939*

IN 1934, MARKING A CONSIDERABLE IMPROVEMENT, the city began to function under a new and better governmental structure. The many years of increasing criticism of the old 1891 charter led at length to drastic revision.

A change had been made in 1927 when the term of the mayor and all elected officials was extended from one to two years. This assured greater continuity of policy and administration, and removed the expense and frequent confusion attending annual elections.

This change was kept and many more were made in the new charter adopted in 1932 by an overwhelming majority. In place of the old Board of Aldermen of seven members and the Common Council of fourteen members, it substituted a single legislative body, a City Council of eleven members, one elected by each of the seven wards and four elected at large.

The School Committee was reduced from fourteen to seven members, one elected by each of the wards for a four-year term. The City Clerk was the only other elected official. All candidates were to run on a nonpartisan basis, without party designation.



The large city departments of Public Works, Public Welfare, and Public Health, formerly directed by 3-man Boards, were placed under single commissioners, appointed by the mayor with the approval of the City Council. All other chief officials were similarly appointed except the City Solicitor, whose name did not have to go before the Council for approval. The mayor was empowered to remove any official appointed by him if a majority of the City Council approved.

In addition to his large appointive power, the mayor was given a veto over the acts of the City Council. To override the mayor's veto required a vote of at least eight of the Council's eleven members. Under the new "strong mayor" type of government, the powers of the Council were further restricted. It might reduce the appropriations asked by the mayor in his annual message or in later requests. But it could not increase them.

In the first nonpartisan election under the new order, Allen H. Bagg, mayor in 1905-07 and always a Republican, ran for mayor against Patrick J. ("P.J.") Moore, the Democratic incumbent. Bagg and Moore had been rival candidates for the office twenty years before, in 1913, when Moore had won by 54 votes. In the 1933 election, Moore carried all of the wards except 4 and 5—"the Solid South." Here Bagg was given such high majorities that he won with more than 600 votes to spare.

As his first act, the new mayor made a clean sweep in all offices, appointing his own men, putting in no one, so many complained, but "good Republicans." However that may have been, the nonpartisan character of city elections tended to remove certain undesirable pressures and has met with general approval down the years.

The first mayor to devote his full time to the office, Bagg followed his predecessor's policy of financial retrenchment, being anxious to strengthen the city's credit.

"You can fool some of the people, but you can't fool the banks," he said—a statement open to some doubt in view of the banks' heavy investments and total losses, shared by some of the local banks, in the notorious multi-million dollar frauds of Ivar Kreuger and Samuel Insull, not to mention the com-

plete collapse of other huge financial empires under less questionable circumstances.\*

In any case, Mayor Bagg cut expenditures to the bone and ordered a more determined effort to collect unpaid taxes. Those long delinquent in paying their water rates had their hydrants shut off, leaving them without any drinking supply or sewage facilities until the State Health Board objected and had service restored. Street lights in outlying areas were turned off, as were many traffic lights in the business district, even along busy North Street, which aroused sharp complaints.

Wage and salary cuts for city officials and employees, including teachers and all employed in the schools, remained in force. School services were curtailed again, resulting in the dismissal of thirty-four teachers. Appropriations for the Public Works Department fell to \$355,000, having declined from more than \$1,000,000 in 1929.

On the other hand, the costs of public welfare continued to rise steeply—from \$74,000 in 1929 to \$101,500 in 1930, to \$655,840 in 1933, and to almost \$1,500,000 in 1934. Of this last sum the Federal government contributed \$640,200, which was spent almost wholly in paying wages on work relief projects.

Other Federal agencies and the Red Cross made contributions in kind, giving almost \$100,000 worth of flour, cloth, coal, and other essentials for free distribution among the needy. Without these and other forms of outside aid, the city would have had either a huge deficit, or a much larger tax rate. The latter was high enough as it was for poverty-stricken times, being \$40 a thousand.

Public Welfare had become the largest of the city departments. Suddenly called upon to shoulder an unprecedented load, pushed and pulled by political pressures, it had stumbled a bit,

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\*Just at this time it transpired at the great banking investigations in Washington that J. P. Morgan and his partners, President Alfred Wiggins of the Chase National Bank, President Charles Mitchell of the National City Bank, Otto H. Kahn, and other financial titans had paid no Federal income tax since 1930 while millions of Americans in modest circumstances, worried sick about how to pay their grocery bills, were digging deep into their pockets to keep the Federal government afloat.

The income tax laws were found to contain loopholes so large that smart operators could drive through them not only ox-carts, but whole racing stables and ocean-going yachts.



which was not strange. Want of sufficient trained personnel led to confusion and inefficiency. Its records and bookkeeping left much to be desired. Without any guiding philosophy or clear policy directives, the department had to improvise as best it could.

In 1933, Mayor Moore, desperately needing \$600,000 to feed the hungry and meet the city's other obligations, had approached the local banks for a loan. They informed him that they would advance no more money unless welfare operations were drastically overhauled. Finally, after the resignation of the Public Welfare superintendent, the banks granted the \$600,000 loan, six months after it had been applied for. Meantime, it had seemed on more than one occasion that Public Welfare would have to suspend for want of funds to carry out its functions.

In 1934, under the new charter, the administration of welfare was improved. Abolishing the old 3-man Welfare Board elected by the voters, the charter provided for the appointment of a single commissioner to head the department. To that post, Mayor Bagg appointed Charles H. Hodecker, who is still in office. Hodecker was also placed in charge of the local Emergency Relief Administration, largely financed by Federal funds.

The Welfare Department soon moved to larger quarters in the Howard Building on Fenn Street. Previously, it had conducted its business at City Hall, in the Council Chamber and wherever there was room for a desk—along the corridors, or in any empty space at all. There was no privacy whatever for interviews on intimate personal and family problems. The City Hall, already too small for ordinary needs, was packed all day and often far into the night with men and women in desperate need of work or relief. Halls and stairs were so crowded that the mayor and others had difficulty and occasionally some embarrassment in pushing through to reach their offices.

Established in more adequate quarters, Public Welfare was completely reorganized to achieve greater efficiency and remove the cause of many just criticisms and complaints. But administrative reform did nothing to solve the main problem—how to

reduce poverty and lighten the relief rolls by finding jobs for the unemployed.

In many respects, 1934 was the worst of the Great Depression years in Pittsfield. Though employment and payrolls did not fall off, they did not increase either, and many younger people had come into the labor market. A number who had struggled to keep off the relief rolls were now at the end of their resources and had to apply for assistance. Those on the welfare and unemployed lists increased 20 per cent over 1933, rising to almost 1,500 families, more than a tenth of those in Pittsfield, with the cost per family averaging about \$10 a week.

Foreclosure and tax title cases went up 35 per cent over 1933, giving Register of Deeds Walter S. Dickie one of his busiest years. New building construction fell to \$347,000, not a tenth of what it had been in 1929. The authorities established a Civic Improvements Work Relief Program, setting aside \$120,000 for the purpose. But this was merely a bookkeeping item. Instead of being spent for home relief, money would be used for work relief on projects of some permanent value.

Most Americans, especially those in extreme need, showed remarkable restraint during these years under circumstances that would have tried the patience of a saint. In Pittsfield, many families on relief went hungry for days at a time when food orders did not arrive on schedule, held up for no necessary reason. People were put on and taken off the public assistance rolls in an often arbitrary fashion.

In January 1934, with the temperature plunging down to zero and below, those employed on the work projects had to walk to their jobs because the city suddenly refused to transport them in its trucks. To save a few dollars, the city had taken out no liability insurance on its trucks and feared the risk of damage suits if any passengers were injured.

Then hours and wages on CWA projects were cut. A few weeks later, overnight and without any explanation, all local CWA projects closed down, leaving 1,400 people to walk the streets, harried by worry and uncertainty, not knowing where to turn. Shortly, again without explanation, they were back on



their jobs, only to be told that CWA projects would end permanently about two months later.

Early in 1934, several hundred formed a Pittsfield League of Unemployed. More than 800 attended the League's first regular meeting, which chose as president Maurice J. Cavanaugh, a former member of the City Council.

Little more than a week later, state police came in to hunt for "Reds" among the local unemployed. Sharply criticized for this, Mayor Bagg denied that he had asked for the police, or for any investigation.

Holding their annual convention in Washington at this time, the Daughters of the American Revolution were shown a "Communism map" vividly marked to indicate the 1,500 "dangerous centers" in the country. Pittsfield appeared prominently as a "Red" center, which was ridiculous and an insult to the community.

In conservative circles all union activity, or anything remotely similar, was suspect in spite of the fact that national policy in this regard had been quite explicitly stated in the NRA act. Its much-cited Section 7a guaranteed workers the right "to organize and bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing," a provision soon written into permanent legislation. Many employers were not yet prepared to accept this "radical" doctrine, though it is now accepted as a matter of course throughout the country, chiefly because labor took concerted steps to assert its rights.

With wages low and prices rising, the employed as well as the unemployed were restive. Workers at the local button factory in one of the old Tillotson mills walked out in protest against wages of \$8 a week or less. Uniting their forces, they organized what was said to be the first button-makers union in the world, but lost the strike. Electrical and plastics workers at the General Electric plant talked of organizing. But the local labor front remained relatively quiet until the fall of 1934 when a nation-wide textile strike was called, partly for better wages and working conditions, but primarily for the right to organize.

Because they were unorganized, the strike did not immediately affect the Pittsfield mills. Those in North Adams, however, were unionized and the workers there, having struck, dispatched representatives to Pittsfield to help organize. The North Adams group was met at the city line by Chief of Police Sullivan, who, setting up a road-block, ordered them to turn around and "never come back."

But back they came, individually or in small groups, and a Pittsfield local of the United Textile Workers of America was organized at a large meeting in Curtin Hall on Peck's Road. Workers walked out of the mills of the Berkshire Woolen and the Wyandotte Worsted, the chief operating plants, and established picket lines around the factories. The pickets were joined by Dr. Albert Sprague Coolidge, a professor at Harvard and a candidate for United States Senator on the Socialist ticket. Coolidge also addressed General Electric workers at the main gates of the plant.

Dr. Coolidge's presence embarrassed those advocates of "law and order" who were arguing the desirability of "roughing up" the pickets a bit, for Coolidge was the son of Mrs. Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, one of the city's best known and most respected citizens, a generous contributor to many of its causes, founder of Pittsfield's already world-renowned South Mountain Chamber Music Festival.

As a co-sponsor, her son had come to attend the festival which was just then being held, with hundreds of notables in attendance. A black eye for Coolidge, it was obvious even to the more obtuse, would be a black eye for the town and therefore to be avoided.

No violence marked the strike, which soon ended with neither side making any concessions. This strike, though lost, was the beginning of the powerful modern trade union movement in Pittsfield.

Even at the depths of the depression, bread-and-butter worries did not wholly occupy the city, which found opportunities to enjoy some of the pleasures of life. In 1933, a Community Concert Association had been established, bringing to Pittsfield



from year to year many famed musicians and singers. Fritz Kreisler, Josef Hofmann, Jascha Heifetz, Jose' Iturbi, Lotte Lehmann, and Marian Anderson were among those who performed before large and appreciative audiences in the high school auditorium. The Berkshire Musical Association, composed of musicians and friends of music in the county, was organized in 1934, principally for the performance of oratorios by mixed choruses.

Also in 1934, after a lapse of some years, the unique chamber music festival at South Mountain was resumed. Organized in 1918, the festival had been held annually at South Mountain down to 1924 when its sponsor-creator, Mrs. Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, gave the Federal government an initial sum of \$94,000 for the erection of an auditorium in Washington for the performance of chamber music, regarding this as the best method "to nationalize the art."

The auditorium was built adjoining the Library of Congress and here, along with concerts throughout the year, the South Mountain festival was presented until 1934 when Mrs. Coolidge decided on a "home-coming." The renowned festival was brought back to Pittsfield where it has since remained, its fame growing with the years.

The first of the resumed festivals on South Mountain opened with the César Franck quartet, the composer's only work of the kind, played by the South Mountain String Quartet which Mrs. Coolidge had founded in 1924. Along with accepted classics in the field, the festival presented the works of several young American composers for the first time. Mrs. Coolidge was always especially interested in encouraging talent and affording it an opportunity for recognition, offering prize awards for new compositions or commissioning them directly. Also interested in acquainting the public with European chamber music organizations, Mrs. Coolidge had brought the Casella-Poltronieri-Bonucco Trio from Rome to contribute to the program. For the first time, the festival concerts were nationally broadcast from South Mountain.

It was in 1934, too, at the worst of the depression, that another great musical institution was established in the Berkshires—what has become the famed Tanglewood symphonic concert series in neighboring Lenox. The first of the series was presented on the Dan Hanna Farm in Stockbridge, where some members of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra gave three concerts with Henry Hadley as conductor.

In 1936, the festival was moved to the Lenox estate of Mrs. Margaret Emerson. Here Serge Koussevitzky led the Boston Symphony in three concerts played in a huge tent covering a half acre or more. One summer storm all but brought the tent down, pointing to the need of better quarters, and the renowned Tanglewood Shed was built, a unique structure. The \$100,000 Shed, financed by public subscription, was dedicated in 1938.

Since 1932, when it had been founded by Ted Shawn, the School of Dance at Jacob's Pillow, as outstanding a development in its way as Tanglewood and South Mountain, had been presenting recitals of modern and classic dance every summer on Friday and Saturday afternoons. The now widely-known Berkshire Playhouse opened in Stockbridge in 1938. Taking over and remodeling the old Stockbridge Casino, the Playhouse offered as its first presentation *The Cradle Song*, performed by Eva LeGallienne and her Civic Repertory Theatre Company of New York. All of these well-patronized neighboring institutions brought many people to Pittsfield in search of lodgings or restaurants, or cocktail lounges, or just to look around.

With 1935, economic conditions in Pittsfield slowly began to improve. There was a small but substantial increase in employment, in wage rates, and in volume of business. Among other orders, the General Electric plant was building huge transformers to be installed at Boulder Dam. The Pittsfield Electric Company spent \$225,000 to improve its equipment and office building. After a disastrous fire, Woolworth's erected a new building on North Street at a cost of \$60,000. Through the generosity of Z. Marshall Crane of Dalton and of his sister, Mrs. Samuel G. Colt of Pittsfield, a large \$90,000 addition to the Museum was constructed.



Retail trade began to expand. Early in 1935, opening a new business, the first special snow trains from New York and other cities were routed to Pittsfield, bringing in thousands of skiers to practice their skills on the Honwee Mountain slopes or those at Yokun Seat. The latter were soon lighted at night for the first time, and large groups came from Lenox, Stockbridge, and Lee to join the Mount Greylock Ski Club in evening frolics.

Recovery was even more pronounced in 1936. The city recorded a marked drop in the number of families on relief as employment rose rapidly, being 50 per cent above 1935, twice as high as in 1933. The General Electric plant almost doubled its working force within twelve months. The textile mills, the Eaton Paper Corporation, and other local industries began hiring many more workers.

By the end of the year, due not only to increased employment but to wage increases, the weekly payroll of Pittsfield's twenty-two largest firms totalled more than \$193,000, substantially up from \$132,000 the year before. In addition, local concerns gave their employees Christmas bonuses, gifts, and profit-sharing payments of more than \$250,000. The 1936 Yuletide holidays were the happiest the city had known for seven years.

In the 1936 national elections, Governor Alfred M. Landon was nominated by the Republicans to run against President Franklin D. Roosevelt, seeking his second term. Intent on again being the first in the country to report complete returns, as they had been doing since 1916, the voters in neighboring New Ashford were up early as usual. By 6:38 a.m., the ballots had been counted, and a special *Eagle* staff from Pittsfield radioed the news to the world—26 votes for Landon, 19 for Roosevelt.

But the town suffered the humiliation this time not only of being beaten by Millsfield, New Hampshire, but of not even finishing second, being also outstripped by a town in Vermont. When the next elections came in 1940, New Ashford was "the forgotten town." Having lost the crown, voters there could do some chores or even lie comfortably abed before repairing at their leisure to the polls, which perhaps pleased them just as

well as the ephemeral headlines they had been winning every four years.

Most political “experts” expected a comfortable Landon victory, largely on the basis of public opinion polls, especially that conducted by *The Literary Digest*. This weekly magazine never recovered from its confident prediction of the election results. Its poll was entirely discredited by the huge Democratic landslide, the greatest in our history, and the magazine soon ceased publication.

Landon carried only two states—Maine and Vermont. In Pittsfield, Berkshire County, and Massachusetts the vote was heavily for Roosevelt. The Democrats greatly increased their already commanding majorities in both houses of the Congress.

One of the relatively few Republicans to escape the Democratic sweep was the representative of the 1st Massachusetts Congressional District, which included Pittsfield—Allen T. Treadway, of neighboring Stockbridge. He was returned to the House for his thirteenth consecutive term and was continuously reelected down to his retirement in 1944. At that time he was the senior Republican member in the House, having served there for thirty-two years, becoming a powerful figure in party circles.

In 1937, with the approach of the biennial city elections, Mayor Allen H. Bagg, serving his second term, announced that he would not run again. As his successor, the voters chose James Fallon, attorney and special justice of the District Court, who ran on a platform of “no promises” to anyone. He was given a large majority—more than 5,250 votes—the largest majority a candidate for the office had yet received.

“It was the first time I ever voted for a candidate who suited me perfectly,” the Mayor-elect smilingly remarked, and he seemed to suit the city, too. He was returned to office many times by large majorities, directing affairs at City Hall for ten years before announcing his retirement.

Meantime, in Washington, pointing to “one third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, and ill-nourished,” the second Roosevelt administration had taken measures to help correct this by re-



viving agriculture, coal mining, and other severely depressed industries, and by promoting low-income housing, fair labor standards, and an extensive social security program. The curve of employment continued to rise.

In 1937, there were 8,500,000 more people at work than in 1933. Yet there remained almost 10,000,000 unemployed. Production was approaching the high 1929 level, but the population had steadily grown since that time. As a result, there were far more workers than jobs. It would take a great war and attendant preparations to close that gap.

Pittsfield had its share of unemployed, most of them working on WPA, PWA, and various Federal projects, some of which were substantial. A new \$50,000 State police barracks was built on Dalton Avenue. With PWA bearing almost half the cost, the city constructed a new sewer bed installation for \$275,000, three main bridges for \$90,000, and the Sand Wash Brook Dam and Reservoir for \$300,000.

Projects for writers, artists, and other professional people were established. The painters, etchers, and others working in the graphic arts had occasional exhibits in the Museum, the Athenaeum, and other places. The local Writers Project, under the direction of Clay Perry, compiled and wrote an engaging guide book entitled *The Berkshire Hills*, a valuable and useful work on Berkshire County, past and present. Sponsored by the Berkshire Hills Conference, issued by a New York publishing house for general distribution, the book was part of the extensive American Guide Series. The local Writers Project also published a *Winter Sports Guide* for the county, and *Motor Tours in the Berkshire Hills*.

With Federal aid, Pittsfield got a new police station at long last, a handsome two-storied brick structure across School Street from the old town lockup, and facing the post office. At once a police station, a comfort station (the only public convenience of the kind), and a municipal annex providing office space for several city departments, the new \$220,000 building was occupied early in 1940. The old lockup was renovated and refitted

to provide more badly-needed office space for city business, and is still so used.

Private building increased at the same time. New construction in 1938 totalled more than \$900,000, the highest since 1931, almost triple what it had been in 1934. Part of the old Allen Farm off the Dalton road was opened as a new residential district. Named Allen Heights, some 200 acres in extent, this was the first large real estate development since the crash. Having acquired in 1931 the adjoining building of J. R. Newman & Sons, men's clothiers, England Brothers further enlarged their already large department store on North Street in 1937. The Old Colonial Theatre on South Street was renovated and reopened as a movie house.

Facilities were built for Pittsfield's first radio station, WBRK, which went on the air early in 1938. A few months later, the first airmail flight from the city left the airport, which had been enlarged and improved as a WPA project. Almost \$10,000 was spent in modernizing the old Hinsdale house on Wendell Avenue, the new quarters of the Women's Club, given by Simon England.

St. George's Greek Orthodox Church dedicated a new house of worship on Bradford Street. A bell tower was added to St. John's Ukrainian Catholic Church. A large new \$90,000 parish school appeared on Melville Street, built by Notre Dame Church to accommodate 300 pupils.

While no new public school buildings were constructed, the older structures were rehabilitated under an extensive program that provided them with new plumbing, new boilers, sanitary drinking fountains, new roofs, new desks, better lighting, and some much-needed paint both inside and out. Classes were removed from the undesirable "portable" schools, which were sold and carted away. The school budget again allowed the purchase of new textbooks and other modern tools of learning to replace the old texts and obsolete materials the children had been using for years.



The city's finances had so far improved, in fact, that teachers had their salary cuts restored. The wage cuts of other city employees were rescinded.

By the end of 1937, industrial workers were receiving a higher average wage in Pittsfield than in any city in the state—\$30.28 a week. Payrolls in the city had risen to almost \$240,000 a week. With local business improving, Bobby Jones, one of the great golfers of all time, bought the franchise of the Coca Cola Bottling Company on West Housatonic Street. Bringing in more outside capital, the J. J. Newberry Company, operator of a chain of variety stores, opened a gleaming emporium on North Street, leasing the quarters of Wallace's, one of the city's larger and older stores.

Thinking that sufficient had been done in "priming the pump," hoping that private business could now keep going on its own, the Roosevelt administration drastically cut its appropriations for road-building, PWA construction, WPA projects, CCC camps, and other Federally-supported programs.

A sharp slump followed. Payrolls in Pittsfield dropped almost 20 per cent within a few months. The city's welfare costs rose to almost \$800,000 for 1938, exceeding the budget estimates by \$280,000. This caused serious financial strain and a general mood of pessimism. But this secondary depression soon passed as the Federal government came to the rescue again by expanding its relief programs and grant-in-aid projects.

Meantime, New England had been struck and almost paralyzed by a great hurricane. The tail of one of those fearful twist-ers that every fall come roaring out of the West Indies, this one hit the Northeast with terrific force on September 27, 1938, taking a heavy toll of lives, more than 500 in all.

The greatest loss of life occurred along the Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts coasts, though the screaming winds swept up the valleys and wrought great destruction as far inland as the White Mountains in New Hampshire, disrupting communications, taking down houses and barns, making a shambles of great forests. Then came devastating floods from the torrential rains that accompanied the storm.

The Berkshires escaped the worst of the winds, which passed to the south and east. But damage was nevertheless heavy. The whole county was blacked out as wires went down. Highways were washed away, railroad lines were blocked, many houses and buildings were damaged, and tens of thousands of fine young and old trees were lost. In Pittsfield, floods caused one death and forced scores of families in the Lakewood section to abandon their homes and flee for their lives. East Lee, Adams, and North Adams were the most severely hit. Flood damage in North Berkshire alone was estimated at more than \$2,500,000.

After three days of chaos, some semblance of order began to be restored. Repair crews were brought into New England from as far away as the Midwest. Hundreds of linemen made Pittsfield their headquarters as they worked to restore telephone and electric power service in the Berkshires. Arterial highways were hurriedly patched up. A week after the storm, trains were running again on the main tracks, but several months passed before normal service was resumed on secondary lines. All told, the hurricane cost New England close to one billion dollars, not to speak of the hundreds killed and the many thousands injured.

But these years brought Pittsfield more than hard times and hurricanes. Giving the town something else to talk and think about, Police Chief Sullivan had a head-on collision with the facts of life in *Life*, the illustrated weekly, which in one of its numbers presented a four-page feature on "The Birth of a Baby." The article was soberly, scientifically, and unsensational-ly done, with photographs taken from a documentary film of the same title which had been seen by millions, having been exhibited and widely praised from coast to coast.

The Chief took a very dim view of all this. Whether well or ill done, he would have none of it. Though he could not detect the diabolical hand of Communism in the article, and did not go so far as to pronounce it obscene, he was nevertheless adamant that "The Birth of a Baby" had no place in Pittsfield and that *Life* could be seen in the city only with four pages ripped out.



"Articles of this kind do more harm than good," he said. "Speaking as a father, I feel it my duty to ban such public display." Besides, it was "muffled propaganda for birth control"—though there was not a word about that subject in the article.

A careful reading of the charter and the laws, said some, failed to reveal the Chief's authority to impose his taste, doctrine, and personal views upon the community. "Speaking as a father" was not part of his commission. As the controversy over censorship grew more heated, Mayor Fallon declined to intervene, saying that it was a matter for the police, which only inflamed the debate.

If the Chief were really concerned about the corruption of tender young minds, why had he not done something about all the pornography and horror stories on the newsdealers' shelves? asked the *Eagle*, picturing the lurid covers of a sample of this "literature," bearing such titles as *Girls for Torture*, *Spicy Adventure Stories*, and *Women in Crime*.

For its pains, the *Eagle* was roundly abused by a vociferous few, including some of the clergy, Catholic and Protestant, who took the newspaper to task for gratuitously advertising such publications, but without saying a word about the publishers and purveyors of such trash and filth.

Newsdealers thought it prudent, however, to do something—or at least make a pretense—about cleaning up their shelves. As is obvious, the reform was not permanent. In spite of all protests, the *Life* number remained under ban in Pittsfield, as in Springfield, Northampton, Boston, and several other Massachusetts cities. But unexpurgated copies were bootlegged into Pittsfield from neighboring towns and widely circulated, without any marked effect upon the increase—or the decrease—of the birthrate.

By 1939, with the depression lifting, the country was in a more optimistic mood, beginning to draw plans for a brighter future. It was symptomatic that New York organized a great World's Fair to show the "World of Tomorrow," with exhibits from all over the country and most of the globe. Laid out on a lavish scale at Flushing Meadows, Long Island, the fair attract-

ed millions of visitors, many of them coming time and again to take in all the wonders.

None of the attractions was more popular than the General Electric's fascinating "House of Magic," in which the exhibit of wonders came to a climax with a demonstration of man-made lightning—a terrific thunderbolt of 10,000,000 volts, produced by apparatus designed and built in Pittsfield. More than 2,500,000 people witnessed this awesome display within a few months.

The fair opened on May 1, 1939, and a few days later there descended upon it a large party from Pittsfield, organized by the local Dope Club. This club had been founded in 1909 by thirteen members, all of them newspapermen, who from time to time initiated more of the profession and a few honorary members chosen among local worthies.

The activities of the club were largely festive, and a very good time was usually had by all, though some had difficulty the next morning in recalling just what they had been doing the night before. After some years of suspended animation, the club was revived in 1939 to take in the fair, announcing its coming in a telegram to Grover Whalen, New York's official handshaker, who was in charge at Flushing Meadows:

"Five hundred descendants of founders of first county fair held in this country will arrive at your cattle show at 11 tomorrow morning. Berkshire County Commissioners have declared holiday."

The resurrected "Dopes" had twenty-three members, including Judge Arthur M. Robinson, State Representative Matthew J. Capeless, former Mayor Jay P. Barnes, *Eagle* publisher Kelton B. Miller and many members of his staff—Lawrence K. Miller, A. A. Michelson, Theodore Giddings, Richard V. Happel, and Clay Perry, among others. On the New York safari, these were joined by about 400 paying guests of both sexes. A special non-paying guest was Mayor James Fallon.

Early on a Saturday morning, the club's gay and crowded "Berkshire Day Special" pulled out of the Pittsfield station with a well-stocked lounge-buffet car and an orchestra on board.



Faked dispatches soon began pouring in to the *Eagle* office that the Dope train had been sighted at Niagara Falls, Canada; at Biloxi, Mississippi; at Toledo, Ohio, where the militia had been called out to intercept it; at Dodge City, Kansas, where some odd relics had been found along the tracks—"three empty bottles, four carnations (slightly wilted), and one brochure entitled *The Lure of the Berkshires*—all of which had been sent to the local taxidermist.

Correcting all this, a later dispatch announced that the trainload had arrived in New York and been arrested there by Federal Narcotics agents, being freed only upon proof "that the 'Dope' in the Pittsfield Dope Club referred to the members, not to their habits or hobbies."

As a matter of fact, the party was met in New York by Newbold Morris, president of the metropolitan City Council and a long-time summer resident in the Berkshires. The leaders of the group, including Mayor Fallon, were invited to spend some time with Mayor LaGuardia.

The mayor of New York offered to trade city councils with Mayor Fallon, but Fallon assured him that he would be getting no bargain.

After a full day at the fair, the excursionists were home again late that night, with many of them aware at the moment only of aches in the feet and the head. The "World of Tomorrow" could wait till tomorrow when they might feel better, they hoped.

Indeed, the world of peace and progress displayed at New York—a world of infinite potentialities and a promise of a good life for all—was, in a sense, a mirage. Man did have the tools and ingenuity to build a better future. But he lacked the will to build any sensible machinery to keep the peace. The world was plunging toward another terrible bloodbath, the worst in history, ending with A-bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The clouds of war had been piling up all during the Thirties. The American people, preoccupied with their own critical concerns, had taken only casual note of distant events as crisis after

crisis tightened international relations—Japan's invasion of China in 1931 and its moves toward Southeast Asia, the open aggressions of fascist Germany and Italy, the overthrow of the Spanish Republic by General Franco and his Blue Shirts with the aid of Hitler and Mussolini, the Nazis' forcible annexation of Austria.

Shamefully deserted at the Munich Conference by the western democracies with whom it was allied, Czechoslovakia was soon swallowed by the Nazi Reich. Its democratic framework was scrapped, and its elected leaders fled into exile.

Though known to almost none in Pittsfield at the time and to few since, the city was visited in 1939 by the ex-president of Czechoslovakia, Eduard Benes, one of the great statesmen and most ardent democrats of his day. He and his wife were living in exile in Chicago when he was asked to come to Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, to be awarded an honorary degree.

In view of existing conditions, our State Department decided that it might not be safe for him to go by train to Hartford via Springfield. It was arranged that he, his wife, and small party should leave the train at Pittsfield early on the morning of June 18, 1939, where they were met by Colonel William H. Eaton, to whom their safety had been entrusted, and escorted to his house by strong details of city and Massachusetts state police.

Though information had been received that an attempt might be made to assassinate Dr. Benes, there were no untoward incidents. The party later motored to Hartford with Colonel and Mrs. Eaton and a police escort.

As the war clouds darkened, the country took a number of steps to assure our neutrality and isolation in the event of hostilities. It wanted no part in another world war. Belligerents would receive no loans or credits from us. Americans were to stay off belligerents' ships. An embargo was placed on foreign shipments of arms and strategic materials. Washington issued many pleas for peace. But the powder trains had been laid and early in 1939 were rapidly burning toward a gigantic explosion.



Japan moved deeper into China and began creeping down the Asia coast. Italy attacked Albania and annexed it. Germany took over the last of Czechoslovakia and presented Poland with stiff demands.

Seriously alarmed, Britain and France signed a mutual assistance pact with the Poles. The Soviet Union, suddenly reversing the field, signed a neutrality and non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany. The pact fell like a bombshell in Western capitals, giving Hitler the green light to go ahead.

Little more than a week later, on September 1, 1939, *Der Fuehrer* loosed his armies on Poland, setting World War II ablaze. Within little more than a month, the Polish armies were absolutely shattered by the Nazi *blitzkrieg*, which gave a shocked world its first full revelation of the might of armored columns, the horror of indiscriminate bombing from the air, and other revolting aspects of modern warfare.

On September 3, Britain and France declared war on Germany, honoring their recent pledges to Poland. This country proclaimed its neutrality, though President Roosevelt declared in a fireside radio chat:

"This nation will remain a neutral nation, but I cannot ask that every American remain neutral in thought as well."

A month before the shooting began, Dr. Albert Einstein, a refugee from Nazi Germany, had sent President Roosevelt a letter, the contents of which were not publicly known for many years. Dated August 2, 1939, it was as important a letter as any ever written:

"Some recent work by E. Fermi and L. Szilard,\* which has been communicated to me in manuscript, leads me to expect that the element Uranium may be turned into a new and important source of energy in the immediate future . . . .

"A single bomb of this type . . . exploded in a port . . . might very well destroy the whole port, together with the surrounding territory."

Though no one in Pittsfield and few elsewhere knew it, mankind was entering—for weal or woe—a new era, the atomic age.

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\*Also refugees from fascist tyranny.

## IX

# *Pittsfield and World War II*

## *1940-1945*

WAR IN EUROPE had one immediate effect in Pittsfield. It caused—or at least was made the pretext for—a sudden steep increase in prices, for food especially. Overnight, housewives had to pay much more for flour, sugar, meat, eggs, lard, and other staples.

With the community still feeling the results of the depression, this was a serious matter for thousands of families. City authorities declared the price increases unnecessary and “wholly unwarranted.” They officially denied rumors of impending “shortage.” But prices did not come down.

Though the effect was not so immediate, Pittsfield soon began to feel, with the rest of the country, the pinch of higher Federal taxes as the Congress appropriated more and more billions for national defense. In an unprecedented measure that some derided as impossible to achieve, Washington initiated and successfully carried through a program to build 50,000 airplanes within a year, at the same time strengthening the Army and Navy.

In August 1939, even before the outbreak of hostilities abroad, members of the local National Guard units—Company I and the Headquarters Company of the 3rd Battalion, 104th Infantry—went by special train to Plattsburg, New York, where



for two weeks they participated with 52,000 troops in the largest peace-time war games in our history.

During the manoeuvres, National Guard units were pitted against regular Army detachments and did so badly that the War Department immediately called them out again for another week of training in the field.

In November 1939, with the weather wet and getting colder, some 400 Guardsmen from the Berkshires and from Greenfield assembled in Pittsfield and took over a former CCC camp on West Mountain, which they "successfully defended against all comers," they said, "and suffered no casualties to speak of," though they described the week as generally miserable and "worthless."

Aiding a national campaign to increase recruiting for the armed services, the city held several large patriotic meetings in the Armory. This was followed by a house-to-house canvass in search of single men aged 18 through 35 who might be persuaded to join the Army.

Recruiting, it must be said, was not brisk, and more meetings were held, with a plethora of speakers urging all younger men to do their duty. During 1940, more than 300 from the Berkshires volunteered for service in the Army, with Pittsfield supplying a third of these.

During the year, at the local airport, ten students won their "wings" as graduates of the Civilian Pilot Training Program. Sponsored by the Civil Aeronautics Administration in Washington, this program was designed to provide the military flying services with young men who knew how to get up in the air—and down again—and could immediately proceed to advanced training.

At the same time, about thirty young people, including several girls, took private flying instruction at the airport. All of this greatly stimulated local interest in aviation and led to the formation of the Berkshire Flyers' Club.

One of the early graduates of the local Civilian Pilot Training Program was William F. Avery, who joined the Royal Air Force, became a junior officer, and was one of the city's first

casualties in the war, being killed while in service in England in December 1941.

War orders from abroad and growing defense expenditures at home stimulated industry throughout the country, markedly in Pittsfield. The local unemployment problem, which had been more or less acute since 1927 and very severe throughout the Thirties, began to ease as more and more workers found jobs, with a consequent sharp decline in the number on the relief rolls.

By the end of 1940, the level of employment in the city was higher than it had been in 1929. It had increased more than 25 per cent within the year as the wheels of local factories started humming again at full speed. Industry here and elsewhere suddenly had to meet the needs not only of the military but of millions of re-employed workers who were in the market once more for many things they had been deprived of during the long Depression.

The Berkshire, the Wyandotte, and other local mills began turning out woolens and various textiles by the millions of yards, chiefly for use in military uniforms, overcoats, and blankets. The machine shops of the E. D. Jones & Sons Company, producers of paper-mill machinery, were put to work making anti-aircraft searchlights, machine tool parts, metal shields for cannon, and propeller shafts for Liberty ships.

The greatest expansion of working force and facilities occurred at the General Electric plant. The company built in its Morningside area a \$750,000 power-house extension, a new \$150,000 plastics building, a \$100,000 and then a \$325,000 addition to the transformer tank shop, and a large new \$8,000,000 facility on Plastics Avenue for making naval ordnance equipment. More than 90,000 yards of earth had to be moved for the construction of this building, which was 800 feet long and 320 feet wide. By the end of 1941, the number of workers at the General Electric plant totalled almost 10,000, more than twice as many as three years before.

A new era in local labor-management relations opened in 1940 when, after more than two years of organizational work,



the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers Union of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) was officially recognized by the General Electric Company as the bargaining agent for those employed at the local works.

Early in 1937, after the historic decision of the United States Steel Company to sign a company-wide union contract with the CIO steel workers, the General Electric Company agreed to discuss a similar contract with the CIO electrical workers union. Organization of workers at the Pittsfield plant was slow and met with many difficulties. Police Chief Sullivan prohibited the circulation of union leaflets at the General Electric gates as a "violation of city ordinances."

All previous attempts at trade union organization in the plant had failed. But there was a new climate of industrial relations throughout the country, and by 1939 there were two union locals at the plant—one for shop workers, the other for office workers.

Early the next year, they petitioned the National Labor Relations Board for an election to determine whether the employees at the local plant wished the UERMW to act as their bargaining agent. By a vote of 2,723 to 1,322, the shop workers chose Local 255 of the union to represent them. Local 254 was chosen to represent the "white collar" workers.

Since June 4, 1940, when the results of this election were announced, the trade union movement has been one of great influence and growing weight in Pittsfield.

The result of the vote at the General Electric plant, by far the largest employer in town, encouraged more trade union organization. A local Retail Clerks Association decided to affiliate with the CIO. A new independent union, the Federation of State, City, and Town Employees, organized a local in Pittsfield with about 130 members.

Meantime, other new CIO unions had established themselves in the city, which had previously known only the older and more conservative AFL craft unions, such as the carpenters, the bricklayers, the plumbers, the tinsmiths, and others.

In 1937, a strike at the Lichtman Tanning Corporation, during which striking workers clashed with the police, brought about recognition of a CIO local. Other CIO unions were recognized by the Berkshire Button Company and the Musgrove Knitting Company. In May 1939, the Berkshire Woolen Company accepted Local 301 of the Textile Workers of America (CIO) as the sole collective bargaining agent for its more than 600 workers.

Hostilities in Europe had quieted down to minor skirmishes after the swift Nazi conquest of Poland. Britain and France were at war with Germany. But there was little action along the Western Front—so little that the war there became known as “the phony war.” But the quiet was deceptive. The Western world was about to be rocked by a series of lightning strokes that would shake it to its foundations.

In the spring of 1940, Nazi forces suddenly attacked and overran Denmark, Norway, Holland, and Belgium—all of them neutrals. Nazi armored columns made a bold dash across northern France to the Channel, cutting off the bulk of the British armies. By heroic means the latter were finally evacuated from Dunkerque and returned to England after all seemed lost. On June 14, the Germans occupied Paris. Three days later, France capitulated, having been attacked from the rear by Mussolini in her hour of peril.

A shock to the entire world, the fall of France left Britain standing alone in the fight against the exultant and seemingly irresistible fascist powers, which began reaching out with fire and sword in many directions.

Ignoring strong American protests, the Japanese established a puppet regime in China and moved into French Indo-China. Hitler sent his victorious armies to the southeast, down the Danube valley, to reduce the Balkans. Mussolini invaded Greece and began successful attacks on British positions in the Mediterranean. Franco Spain gave the Axis its “moral” support, which was all it could afford at the moment, though it later contributed a “Blue” division to Hitler’s forces.



For the anti-fascist world, particularly for the European democracies, the year 1940 was one of almost unrelieved catastrophe, with disaster piled upon disaster.

It was in this atmosphere of gloom and doom, just after the fall of France, that the Berkshire members of the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies called a public meeting in Pittsfield. More than 1,000 people from the city and surrounding area crowded into the high school auditorium to hear a number of prominent speakers discuss the alternatives of American foreign policy.

In the end, the meeting voted, with only seven dissenting voices, that it should be our policy, in the interests of humanity and national defense, to aid Britain by every means "short of war."

This seemed to be the majority opinion throughout the country. Though the feeling against war still ran strong as it had all during the Twenties and Thirties, relatively few objected as surplus arms and aircraft were released to Britain and the nation rapidly stepped up its military preparations and took other security measures.

New defense taxes were levied. All aliens were required to register and report regularly under a national statute still on the books. The local registration roll bore the names of more than 3,000 aliens living in Pittsfield and neighboring towns. The Armory on Summer Street was closed to the public and placed under 24-hour guard, as were all drill sheds in Massachusetts. The local National Guard units were called, as a year earlier, to participate in large war games and field manoeuvres in up-state New York.

In Washington, after protracted debate, the Congress passed the Selective Training and Service Act, the first peace-time program of compulsory military service in our history. It was designed to run for a year and provide training for 1,200,000 troops and 800,000 reserves.

On October 16, 1940, all men aged 21 through 35 were required to register for possible selection and training. In Berkshire County, out of 16,400,000 for the nation as a whole,

15,069 registered. Pittsfield's total was 6,002. Two weeks later, with President Roosevelt observing, Secretary of War Stimson drew the numbers of those who were to report immediately for examination in their respective districts.

It was against this background of fascist triumph abroad and of hurried defense measures at home that the 1940 national election was held. As its presidential candidate, the Republican party chose—to the dismay of the Old Guard—something of a maverick, Wendell Willkie, formerly a Democrat. A man of simple tastes and broad social understanding, an Indiana lawyer of humble beginnings who had risen high in the financial world, he was sardonically and unfairly ridiculed by the Democrats as “the barefoot boy from Wall Street.”

Acting rather coy for a time, as the political proprieties demanded, President Roosevelt accepted his nomination by the Democrats for a third term in the White House, being the first to challenge the two-term tradition established by George Washington. Many regarded this as a trend toward “dictatorship,” the very thing we were so much concerned about abroad.

Both candidates and parties campaigned against active participation in the war. As they were generally agreed on foreign policy and the urgent need of building up national defense, the presidential election was largely fought on the third-term issue.

Pittsfield, Berkshire County, and Massachusetts again gave President Roosevelt a majority, though by a much smaller margin than in 1936, which was the country-wide pattern. Nevertheless, Roosevelt carried thirty-eight states, winning 499 votes in the Electoral College to Willkie's 82. Much as the local press disliked the results, it declared that the American people had “decisively spoken” and should now close ranks to meet the dangerous tasks ahead, which was done with little or no disaffection.

During the campaign, Willkie had visited Pittsfield and spoken to an enthusiastic crowd of 8,000 people on the Common. Mayor Fallon declined to serve as a member of the committee named to welcome Willkie on the ground that it was not part of his duty as a non-partisan mayor to welcome, or in



any way favor, the candidate of one party or the other, whether the race was for the presidency or for state and county offices.

Immediately after the national elections, the first Pittsfield men to be accepted under the new selective service act—seven, in all—departed for the induction center at Springfield. Many more soon followed. Under the terms of the original act, these men were to serve only a year. But their service was later extended to eighteen months.

Under the selective service act, two draft boards were appointed in Pittsfield—#122, with Frederick M. Myers as chairman, and #123, with Leon L. Riche as chairman. The boards functioned under the same direction throughout World War II.

Before the first selectees had finished their service, the country was plunged into global war and required every fighting man it could muster. Of the seven men the city first mustered under selective service, six were still in uniform five years later. Of these, five had served overseas.

As part of the mobilization drive, all National Guard units were called into Federal service in January 1941. The two local companies, with about eighty Pittsfield men in their ranks, entrained for Camp Edwards down on Cape Cod. As they marched to the station, there was no fanfare of any kind. There were no bands playing, and only a few people gathered along the streets to cheer them and wave goodbye.

“It wasn’t like this twenty-five years ago when we left for the Border,” remarked an old soldier, a member of beloved Company F. “When we marched down from the Armory, both sides of the street were lined with people. And when we left, the Red Cross and the Salvation Army loaded us down with cigarettes and candy. I can’t understand the people’s attitude today.”

Most people felt that war had become far too terrible to be an occasion for flag-waving and shouting crowds. War had lost whatever romantic aspects it once had. It was now a cold and scientific business, totalitarian in character, having about it much of the impersonality of a machine. In a sense, it had ceased to be a matter of individuals and did not lend itself to

demonstrations of local pride and patriotism. World War II was a very different war in almost all respects from those that had preceded it.

Early in 1941, at the request of the Air Defense Command, the city established an aircraft warning service. More than 300 men and women volunteered for duty. A thousand or more were doing work of various kinds for the Red Cross, which was actively recruiting for its Volunteer Nurses' Aides Corps.

Mayor Fallon opened the first sale of defense bonds and stamps by purchasing a \$1,000 bond, which got the loan drive off to a good start. Pittsfield oversubscribed its quota, with workers of the city contributing a relatively large amount. Nine out of ten General Electric employees bought bonds, altogether investing within a few months' time more than \$1,000,000 in defense securities.

Military preparations and general defense measures went steadily ahead in all parts of the country through 1941. For many dismal years there had been far more workers than jobs. Now the trend was reversed. In many industries there were more jobs than men to fill them. As in World War I years, there was a rapid increase in women workers.

The General Electric and other local factories were soon using their working staffs in three shifts to keep operations running around the clock. Some went on a 7-day work week, paying time and a half on Saturdays, and double time on Sundays. With labor in great and increasing demand, wages in the city went up step by step, resulting in larger weekly payrolls than ever before.

Pittsfield forgot its "Depression blues" and began to take on an air of general prosperity sadly lacking in the 'Thirties. In October 1941, as a sign of the times, North Street merchants and others in the business district instituted the practice, since continued, of keeping their stores open till nine on Thursday evenings for the convenience of thousands of shoppers who once again had money to spend.

With employment high and steadily rising, workers were attracted from other communities, which faced the city with a



housing shortage that became more and more acute. Very few houses had been built during the Depression; many old "tenements" and rooming-houses were in bad repair.

New building construction had soared to \$2,575,000 in 1940 and almost reached \$2,000,000 the following year. Even so, there were not enough houses or other desirable living quarters to go around, resulting in considerable overcrowding that tended to force newcomers to seek quarters in neighboring towns.

To help relieve this situation, the Federal Public Housing Authority authorized in 1942 the construction of a \$500,000 project designed to provide a hundred temporary prefabricated houses for local war-workers and their families. The project was situated on Benedict Road, at what was named Victory Hill. Though the houses left much to be desired, they met and still meet an urgent need.

Tension between the United States and the Axis powers was rising. But as the year 1941 wore on, our actual participation in hostilities seemed as remote as ever until that fateful Sunday, December 7th, "a day that will live in infamy." Millions of families from coast to coast were listening to their favorite radio programs on that quiet Sunday when all programs were suddenly interrupted with the announcement from Washington that the Japanese were attacking Pearl Harbor, our great mid-Pacific naval base in Hawaii.

A large Japanese fleet had crossed the North Pacific undetected and stopped a few hundred miles north of Hawaii, where its aircraft carriers sent up swarms of bombers and fighters for a "sneak" attack on the ships in Pearl Harbor, and on neighboring airfields and Army installations.

Effecting complete surprise, swooping down early in the morning, the Japanese airmen did tremendous damage in their short two-hour attack. Of eight great battleships caught like sitting ducks in Pearl Harbor, four were sunk, one capsized, and the rest were badly damaged. Altogether, nineteen warships were lost or disabled, as well as 120 American planes on fields near by.

Bombs and bullets from the sky killed 2,335 of our soldiers and sailors, and 68 civilians. Almost 1,200 people were wounded. One of the injured was Raymond Trczinka of Pittsfield, a sailor on one of the battered destroyers in the harbor.

Having brilliantly executed their coup with diabolical skill, the Japanese flyers returned to their ships, having suffered virtually no losses, and the fleet sailed away untouched.

Pittsfield was stunned, as was the rest of the country. The nation had never suffered such unmitigated military disaster. Americans were at once angry and humiliated to be caught so off guard, so literally asleep, at a time of world crisis with dangers lurking on every hand.

There has never been any good explanation of the almost fatal breakdown of our military intelligence services. It was known that a big Japanese fleet was at sea, that it had sailed from the Kuriles late in November, presumably bound for Southeast Asia.

Two Pittsfield servicemen were killed in the Japanese attack. The city's first soldier fatality was Sergeant Edward J. Burns, stationed at the Wheeler air base. To honor him, an elm tree was later planted in Park Square. Subsequently, a memorial stone with a bronze plaque was placed beside it.

The other to die was Roman Walter Sadlowski, a sailor killed at Pearl Harbor on one of the battleships sunk there. A few months after his death, a special book collection dedicated to his memory was established at the Berkshire Athenaeum. Later, he was honored with a memorial stone placed in the small park at the junction of North and First streets.

On December 8, the day after the Pearl Harbor debacle, war was declared on Japan with only one dissenting vote in the Congress. Three days later, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States, and we reciprocated.

With heavy fighting facing us on two long and far distant fronts, the military conscription act was expanded to include all men aged 20 through 44. Registration began almost immediately, adding 9,000,000 names to the draft rolls.



President Roosevelt submitted the "world's biggest budget," a total of 56 billions, calling for 9 billions in new taxes, a staggering sum in itself.

Shortly, he submitted a supplementary budget almost as large—43 billions to raise the number of troops to 4,500,000 and to build 148,000 planes within a year. All of this and even more would be needed before victory was won, for American and Allied forces had to retreat again and again under shattering reverses before the tide of battle turned.

American losses were heavy as the Japanese swept down the Pacific and into the Indian Ocean to occupy Burma and seriously threaten India and Australia. Already holding much of Europe in thrall, Nazi Germany suddenly attacked its ally, the Soviet Union. In a gigantic offensive its armies were soon knocking on the gates of Leningrad and Moscow.

German-Italian forces were racing across North Africa toward the Suez Canal in an effort to conquer the Near East and upset the whole strategic balance. German submarines were prowling the Atlantic in "wolf packs," heavily damaging Allied shipping, sinking American and other vessels within sight of our shores. For many months the outlook was very black indeed.

Pittsfield took the crisis in its stride, with much less than the general hysteria, keeping its eye on the practical things that had to be done. Its response to Pearl Harbor was a rush of enlistments—thirty-nine for the Army in one day. By this time, more than 850 men and women from the city were in service, most of them volunteers.

As soon as war was declared, more than 900 volunteered for duty as air wardens. In January 1942, Pittsfield had its first practice air-raid alarm. As soon as the sirens sounded, if at night, the city was "blackened out" for twenty minutes. Not a light, inside or outside, was to be showing.

Householders either turned the electric switches and sat in the dark, or hurriedly draped heavy curtains over the windows, as the air wardens outside on the streets or on the roofs patrolled their beats in "tin" hats and white armbands, quick to warn about defective curtains or to report to the proper au-

thorities the habitually careless or the “subversively” unconcerned.

As the official view was that German or Italian—or even Japanese—planes might be overhead any minute, all of this was very serious business in Pittsfield as all over the country.

Shortly, however, the Office of Civilian Defense in Washington cancelled Pittsfield’s allotment of gas masks, having decided that the city was in no immediate danger. But its practice of air-raid alerts continued for several years, until it was quite obvious that an enemy plane, even if it could span the Atlantic or Pacific, was not likely to choose any spot in the Berkshires as its target.

With the declaration of war, the entire country was put on short rations in certain items—not enough to cause hardship or even any real inconvenience. But the rationing was sufficient to arouse a selfish few to loud complaints, and to give racketeers an opportunity to profit in a “black” market on restricted articles.

Gasoline, automobile tires, fuel oil, shoes, meats, fats, oils, butter, sugar, coffee, and certain processed foods were rationed by the Office of Price Administration (OPA), established in Washington to accomplish two purposes. First, it was to assure fair shares for all under the rationing program. Second, it established price ceilings on most articles so that the country would not suffer the runaway inflation—“profiteering”—that had accompanied World War I. Though it was much criticized by some and illegally abused by an unscrupulous few, OPA accomplished its mission reasonably well.

Purchases of sugar were limited to a half pound a week per person. Automobiles were not to be used for pleasure driving. Those who had “necessary driving” to do were entitled to sufficient ration coupons for gasoline and tires to keep them going. Everything was done to discourage “non-essential” travel by train, bus, or plane. This and the restrictions on automobile travel seriously affected the tourist and resort business in Pittsfield and the Berkshires throughout the war.



With the school children doing much of the work, the city carried on systematic campaigns for the salvage of useful scrap—iron, steel, copper, aluminum, tin cans, rubber, rags, old newspapers and magazines, cardboard cartons, and the like. Special bins were built in the schools, on Park Square, and at other places for the deposit of “junk.” Housewives contributed old pots, pans, and other utensils. Automobile owners and garage operators threw in old rubber tires. In a week’s time the city salvaged 175 tons of paper, enough to fill ten freight cars. In less than a year the General Electric plant saved \$1,300,000 of scrap—everything from steel filings to rags.

As the war effort expanded, more and more of the city’s young men and women left for service in the armed forces. By 1943, there were more than 3,000 of them in uniform. All of the men were conscriptees after November 1942, when voluntary enlistments were suspended for the duration of the war.

The women in uniform were volunteers. Depending upon their choice, they enlisted for non-combat duties in the Women’s Auxiliary Army Corps (WAACS), Women Appointed for Voluntary Emergency Service (WAVES—Navy), Women’s Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS—Air Force), and *Semper Paratus* Always Ready Service (SPARS—Marine Corps).

The names of some of these organizations were strange, even outlandish, dreamed up by publicity men seeking a certain combination of initial letters for use as a tag. Our stylish “lady” soldiers and sailors seemed more than a little strange to the more conservative, but they quickly silenced all doubters, efficiently performing important duties in posts all around the world. The first of Pittsfield servicewomen to die in uniform was Pfc. Regina T. Barscz, a WAAC, in 1945.

The war news, which had long been depressing, took a turn for the better late in 1942 when American air, naval, and land forces began well-coordinated offensives against Japanese outposts in the South Pacific.

At the same time, a new phase of the European war opened with the launching of Operation Torch. A large American and

British force, commanded by General Dwight D. Eisenhower, landed in North Africa and soon ended the war there, capturing 250,000 Axis prisoners. The Russians were smashing back the German armies which had penetrated deep into their country. Mussolini's government fell and Italy accepted unconditional surrender in September 1943.

Nine months later, on June 6, 1944, began Operation Overlord, the largest amphibious military action of all time, launched from Britain against the German-held northern coast of France. With General Eisenhower in supreme command, the operation involved 176,000 troops, 4,000 invasion craft, 600 warships, and 11,000 planes.

Before landing, American and British paratroopers had been flown over to "jump" from the sky behind the German lines and organize resistance centers there. One of the initial paratroopers to land on this dangerous mission was a Pittsfield soldier, Private Francis A. Rocca, formerly a member of Company I.

The conflict was severe along the Normandy beach as the Allied troops waded ashore from all kinds of craft. Brigadier General Nelson M. Walker, Pittsfield's senior officer in the war, was killed in the fighting.

Born in the city and a graduate of Pittsfield High School, Walker had enlisted during World War I. Commissioned at the Plattsburg Officers' Training Camp, he immediately went overseas, being gassed in the Argonne. After the war, Walker chose to make the Army his career and held important posts as he steadily rose in rank. The General was killed near St. Lo when he went into the open to help bring in two of his men who had been wounded. Many honors were posthumously bestowed on General Walker, and the Army later named a transport for him.

Overcoming fierce resistance, the Allied armies soon broke out of the narrow Normandy beachhead and swept across France. Paris was liberated less than three months after the landing. German troops were driven out of Belgium, Luxem-



bourg, and parts of Holland. Leading the advance, American troops entered German territory on September 12, 1944.

While much fighting remained to be done, final victory was in sight. It was in this atmosphere of hope and of a fervent desire for peace that the 1944 presidential campaign was waged. Both parties agreed that the enemy would be offered no other terms than unconditional surrender and that the country should support and forward in every way the proposed United Nations organization to maintain world peace and security. As their candidate, the Democrats again nominated President Roosevelt, who was opposed by Thomas E. Dewey, Republican governor of New York.

A few days before the election, Dewey's campaign train stopped in the Pittsfield station and a large crowd cheered the candidate as he spoke from the rear platform. On January 20 next, said Dewey, anticipating his occupancy of the White House, he would "start the largest housecleaning in the history of Washington," sweeping out the New Dealers and most of their works.

"It's time for a change," he declared. But the majority of voters in Pittsfield, Berkshire County, Massachusetts, and thirty-five other states did not agree, reelecting President Roosevelt to his fourth term by a comfortable margin.

On April 12, 1945, having served less than three months of his new term, the President died, suddenly stricken with a cerebral hemorrhage, and was succeeded by Vice President Harry S. Truman, formerly a U. S. Senator from Missouri. Pittsfield flew its flags at half-mast to mourn the passing of the much abused and even more widely loved "F. D. R." Always a controversial figure, he had affected the country, its institutions, and its whole manner of life as profoundly as any man in our history. Hailed as "the architect of victory" by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, he did not live to see our final triumph.

Events on the battlefronts had been moving swiftly to a climax. Powerful American and British forces struck into Germany from the west. Massive Russian armies moved in from

the east. The "1,000-year" Nazi Reich was being crushed in a steel vise. Large German armies, apparently irresistible just a few years before, surrendered one by one. Then came V-E (Victory in Europe) Day on May 8, 1945, when Germany capitulated.

Pittsfield's response to this was enthusiastic, but marked by "more confusion than hilarity." There had been reports of an armistice for several days, so that the final official announcement came as something of an anti-climax.

Indeed, the city had held its celebration the day before when, about ten in the morning, the central station air raid siren suddenly sounded. The church bells began to toll. Many people rushed into the streets. Some stores closed; most of them did not. The children were kept in the schools.

After the sirens had been screaming for half an hour, Mayor Fallon had them silenced, complaining that the noise interfered with his work. "The war is only half over," he remarked in ordering business as usual at City Hall. On the following day there was a small but lively parade down North Street.

Though some feared that it might be several years off, the next armistice day was not long in coming. Japan was reeling under thunderous blows now raining from all sides. Early in 1945, Americans recaptured the Philippines and went on to take the strategic islands of Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Russia declared war on Japan and its armies invaded Manchuria.

On August 6, an historic day in the annals of warfare, a frightening portent for all mankind, our planes dropped an atomic bomb on the city and military base of Hiroshima. The bomb destroyed four square miles of the city and killed or injured more than 160,000 people. On August 9, another A-bomb was dropped, on the city and naval base of Nagasaki. Five days later came V-J Day when Japan gave up the hopeless struggle.

On the evening preceding V-J Day, with the official announcement of an armistice expected almost any minute, there had been an informal parade down North Street. As described, it consisted largely of "just milling about." Thousands observed the occasion more quietly by attending the churches or staying



at home, offering prayerful thanks that the awful bloodshed would soon be over at last.

The next evening, at seven o'clock, the radio announced that the armistice had been signed, and Pittsfield celebrated the end of World War II by "really blowing its top." It seemed that almost everybody in the city, old and young, came streaming into North Street as sirens, church bells, and factory whistles signalled the good news. Pittsfield went "wild" with joy and relief.

All formalities were forgotten. Strangers embraced strangers and went dancing and skipping along the street, with a surprising number of bright-eyed small urchins darting through the crowds and getting dangerously underfoot. In New York City style, showers of paper from office buildings descended upon the crowds as they surged up and down North Street and around Park Square, with some hurriedly assembled small bands—most of the members not in uniform—supplying a bit of music. Heavily overloaded automobiles, carrying people on the fenders and even on the front and rear bumpers, joined the procession. The incessant din of their horns was deafening, but in the spirit of the occasion.

Some of the more conventional and officious made several attempts to turn this spontaneous demonstration into something more orderly—into a formal parade—with themselves at the head of it.

But they were impatiently brushed aside. The plain people of Pittsfield, in a high spirit of elation, were on their own this night. They had no need of "marshals of the day" to order them into line and tell them what to do.

Yet the celebration was very orderly, with no serious incidents and very few arrests, due in part no doubt to the fact that all bars and package liquor stores had closed immediately after the siren sounded, as previously ordered by the Licensing Commission at the suggestion of Police Chief Sullivan.

When victory came, so the Chief declared, the bars should be shut tight, principally because so many women frequented them. It was not as it was in the days of the old almost exclu-

sively masculine saloon, and “I don’t need to tell you,” he said, “that a drunken woman in a parade is dynamite.”

The day after the V-J celebration was declared a holiday at City Hall by Mayor Fallon. Almost all stores and offices gave their employees the day off. Whether they did or not, most of their employees took the day off. The General Electric and other larger factories granted their workers a two-day holiday. This was a welcome rest for many who, to speed up war production, had been working seven days a week for some time, taking no vacations.

Almost 6,000 men and women from the city served in the armed forces during the war. On the World War II Honor Roll placed in the Berkshire Athenaeum and dedicated on Memorial Day, 1947, are recorded 5,761 names.\* This was a large number for a community of Pittsfield’s size, representing more than a tenth of the population.

The names of the city’s sons and daughters who died in service—197, in all—are preserved in the Book of Memory, also in the Athenaeum. In addition to those who served in the armed forces, thousands worked for the Red Cross and the many other organizations which did so much to aid our military effort and ease the sufferings and burdens of war.

Pittsfield made other notable contributions to victory. In every war loan campaign, it oversubscribed its quota. The tubes for the first bazookas used by American troops during the war were developed and manufactured at the General Electric plant. The latter also built parts for radar systems and at its big Naval Ordnance building made gun directors and much other war equipment.

In April 1944, more in line with its normal production, the Morningside works made what was up to that time its largest single shipment of transformers, sixteen impressive giants, which were sent overseas to a then undisclosed destination, now

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\*Eligibility requirements for the inclusion of names and service records on the Honor Roll were these: (1) service in the United States armed forces between December 7, 1941 and September 2, 1945—those who served in the Merchant Marine, the Red Cross, or in Allied forces were not included; (2) service had to be credited to Pittsfield and not to another city; (3) legal residence on entering service had to be Pittsfield.



known to be the Soviet Union. It required 70,000 feet of lumber to box this equipment.

Though only a few top officials knew it at the time, the plant had a hand in making the A-bomb possible, building valuable parts of the equipment needed for the manufacture of the bomb. This and other war orders caused a great expansion in the operations and working force at the plant. Employment, which was a mere 2,400 at the end of 1932, rose to a peak of 13,645 in October 1943, a mark that has never since been reached.

Other concerns in Pittsfield were involved in the complicated process of building the A-bomb. The Pittsfield Iron Works and Coal Supply, the May Engineering works, and the E. D. Jones & Sons Company supplied the hush-hush Manhattan Project with certain parts it needed. The workers of these companies labored long hours for many months on a job which they knew was "hot." But they did not suspect its real purpose, thinking that they were fashioning parts for a robot bomb. Local textile mills did their part by furnishing the armed forces with a great quantity of woolens, nylon thread, and nylon parachute cords.

Industrially and in all respects, Pittsfield could be proud of its record in World War II. It had met this national crisis, as every other, with courage, energy, an uncommon degree of cooperation, and an uncomplaining willingness to accept every necessary sacrifice.

In the midst of the war, Pittsfield had been for a time the center of nation-wide attention as the scene of a rather sensational murder trial, perhaps the most widely reported of any in the Berkshires. John F. Noxon, a native son and a prominent and prosperous lawyer, a Harvard graduate whose father had been district attorney in Pittsfield for some time, was indicted and brought to trial on the charge that he was responsible for the death of his infant son, six months old, a disordered and almost helpless mongoloid child. The infant had been electrocuted by contact with an electric light cord under circumstances that seemed curious and more than a little suspicious.

It was widely assumed that this was a "mercy killing." But Noxon made no such plea, protesting his innocence, claiming that the baby's death was accidental, that the infant had somehow got himself entangled with the wire.

The trial opened in February 1944. Noxon's chief counsel was Joseph B. Ely, formerly governor of the state, earlier district attorney at neighboring Westfield, long a friend of Noxon's father. The presiding judge soon declared a mistrial in the case for several reasons. For one, two deputy sheriffs were later found guilty of trying to influence the jury.

Brought to trial again, Noxon was found guilty of first degree murder and sentenced to die in the electric chair after the longest criminal trial in the Berkshire County Superior Court. Judge Abraham E. Pinanski ordered a stay of execution.

Taken to the state prison at Charlestown, Noxon remained in "Death Row" until 1946 when his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. Meantime, his family had left Pittsfield. Late in 1948, Noxon's prison sentence was reduced to six years. He was soon paroled and allowed to rejoin his family, which had stood by him through his trial and imprisonment.

During the war years, Pittsfield had continued to grow. Its population increased from 49,684 in 1940 to 53,560 in 1945. The huge demands of the war effort had stimulated and enlarged its industries. The city generally was prosperous and hopeful, feeling well prepared to meet whatever challenge was in store for it.



## *Post-War Years: 1946-1949*

WITH HOSTILITIES ENDED and the arms of the United Nations triumphant, people everywhere yearned for peace—a long and enduring peace. A period of relative quiet followed, though there was unrest and revolution in many countries, especially in Asia.

The American people had their problems, too. Pittsfield and other industrial communities feared that they would be the first to suffer if the sudden end of war production brought on a sharp business depression. Washington experts were predicting that the number of unemployed in the nation might reach 8,000,000 by Christmas, 1945—an unduly pessimistic prophecy, as it turned out.

Rationing of all foods but sugar ceased. Price controls, though retained for a time on many articles, were somewhat relaxed. As a result, living costs began to rise at a time when total wages were falling.

In the 1945 municipal election, Mayor Fallon was re-elected to serve his fifth term. For the first time a woman won a city-wide elective post, Mrs. Leonora Goerlach. Now librarian at *The Berkshire Eagle*, she received the highest vote among the candidates seeking election as councilman-at-large, repeating her triumph in 1947.

Late in 1945 and early in 1946, with many war veterans returning to their former jobs, labor-management conflicts in

Pittsfield increased. Threatened with strikes, local textile companies granted wage increases of 10 per cent or more. A strike stopped the buses of the local transit company. After a work stoppage, E. D. Jones & Sons signed a pay raise agreement with Local 212 of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America,\* an affiliate of the CIO.

But these were minor skirmishes compared to the great strike at the GE plant, where production had remained high from orders for transformers and other products. The UE locals in the plant asked a pay raise of \$2 a day. Local and national union officials addressed large mass meetings of workers at the GE gates.

A strike vote was called. In balloting conducted by National Labor Relations Board examiners, the workers voted by an overwhelming majority to walk out in support of their demand for a pay increase. On January 15, 1946, the strike began, with the whole Morningside works picketed.

All trade unions in the city, including Local 127 of the Journeymen Barbers International Union, came to the support of the strikers and contributed funds. The American Legion post soon asked Mayor Fallon to help bring about a speedy and amicable settlement of the conflict, which was adversely affecting the whole city.

Three weeks after the walkout, the City Council, by a vote of 10 to 1, urged the GE management "to enter immediately into negotiations with the Union . . . and alter its present policy in favor of a just and equitable attitude toward the wage needs of Pittsfield's GE employees." As three out of four employees in the city worked for GE, the whole community was vitally concerned.

Weeks dragged on until finally, in the middle of March, the strike ended after fifty-eight days. Under the settlement, workers were granted a 10 per cent pay increase, with a slightly higher percentage for those earning less than \$1 an hour.

Though the plant had been tightly picketed, there had been no violence. But the two-months strike had been costly in

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\*Hereafter, in accord with local usage, the union will be referred to as UE.



terms of production and wages lost. Two months after the settlement, GE laid off about 500 employees as business declined.

With travel restrictions lifted, the first special snow trains since 1942 came into the city early in 1946. The New Haven railroad put on two specials—the *Snow Express* and the *Snow Clipper*, which ran non-stop from New York to Pittsfield. When weather favored, the snow trains operated on Saturdays and Sundays, bringing in thousands of skiers and those interested in other winter sports.

As warmer weather came on, "summer people" again appeared in Pittsfield and the Berkshires, and they have since been coming each year in ever larger numbers, providing a major source of revenue for the city and the county.

In September 1946, the city got its first scheduled commercial air passenger service, offered by the New England Central Airways. On the first flight, a two-engined five-passenger Cessna, with all seats occupied by free-riding "honorarys," took off about noon for Boston, arriving there less than fifty minutes later. The members of the party watched a baseball game at the Boston Red Sox park and were back in Pittsfield for dinner, being greeted at the airport by Mayor Fallon and a small crowd to celebrate the occasion. The company promised three flights a day from Pittsfield—a schedule not kept for want of local traffic, and the company soon abandoned the enterprise.

Three years later, on September 20, 1949, the first scheduled airmail flight left the airport. For philatelists—alias stamp collectors—there was a special cachet for letters on this flight. The city had sent off flights of mail before, but not on a regularly scheduled airmail plane.

Meantime, in 1947, Pittsfield had acquired its second radio broadcasting station, Station WBEC. Established and operated by the owners of *The Berkshire Eagle*, the city's daily newspaper, the station was part of the American Broadcasting Company's national network.

Steadily rising since the end of the war, prices suddenly shot skyward in the summer of 1946 when the Congress suspended

the remaining controls of the national Office of Price Administration. Millions groaned as the price of a cup of coffee went up from a nickel to a dime. "Buyers' strikes" were organized in many communities.

Meeting in Park Square to protest "rank profiteering," a large crowd cheered Mayor Fallon as he urged a boycott of "those who are stealing from us the money we have earned." With elections nearing, the Congress decided to quiet the general outcry by restoring OPA and some of its controls for a year. This helped to check runaway prices.

Rising living costs set in motion another round of demands for higher wages. After stiff bargaining, but without any strikes, most local industries agreed to substantial pay increases.

High prices complicated Pittsfield's main post-war problem—housing. Every year the city was facing a more acute housing shortage. This took a double form. There were not enough residential quarters; there were not enough schools.

No elementary school building had been added in twenty years. Many of the older buildings were used not only for elementary grades but as junior high schools. They were so overcrowded that junior high school students had to attend in two shifts.

Very little residential building had occurred during the Depression. There had been none during the war years, except for the temporary housing development of war workers at Victory Hill—a "temporary" development still in use. In 1944, only two new houses were built; in 1945, only thirty-one. New construction, though obviously and urgently needed, was handicapped by the high cost of labor and materials. Real estate developers hesitated to build houses that would be priced too high for ready sale.

Even so, some new housing units were built—254 in 1946, 195 in 1947, and 428 in 1948. Of this last, 126 units were in the Wilson Park development of twenty-eight large buildings, a \$1,000,000 state-financed housing project for war veterans.

But this progress was only a beginning, as a 1948 survey by the Social Agencies' Council revealed. Pittsfield still needed an



additional 1,700-2,000 new dwelling units. This was not because of any marked rise in population, but because people were tired of living in old quarters, and could afford to rent, lease, or buy better ones.

With the approach of the 1947 municipal elections, Mayor Fallon announced that he had been in office long enough, that he was serving his tenth year, that he would not run for re-election. He took occasion to urge the scrapping of the city charter adopted in 1932 and in force since 1934. The question of a change was placed on the ballot.

The form of government he favored, said Fallon, was the city manager type, Plan D. This provided for the appointment of a city manager to be chief administrator of affairs. Policies would be set by five elected officials—a mayor and four councilmen-at-large. Representation by wards would be abolished.

When the matter came to a vote, the city decided by a 3,000 majority to keep the 1932 charter, which remains in force.

Many candidates offered themselves to succeed Mayor Fallon. The primaries reduced the field to two—Robert T. Capeless, a young Pittsfield-born attorney, and Harry J. Burns.

Capeless won by a 2,400 majority, carrying all but one of the seven wards. Not yet thirty when he assumed office, Capeless was by far the youngest mayor in the city's history. Like Mayor Fallon before him, Capeless was returned to office many times. In the 1951 election, he ran without opposition in the only uncontested mayoralty election in Pittsfield's history. Capeless continued in office through 1955, having announced earlier that year that he would not run for re-election.

For a period of almost twenty years, from 1938 to 1956, Pittsfield had only two mayors—since 1934, when the new charter went into effect, only three. This gave the city a remarkable continuity of policy and administration, accounting in no small part for the community's success in solving many difficult problems during the Depression, the war, and the post-war years.

For a few years after the war there had been talk of building an impressive memorial to those who had served during World

War II. As the old City Hall (1832) and the city library, the Berkshire Athenaeum (1876), were both quite inadequate to meet greatly expanded functions, some suggested building a handsome large memorial in the form of a combined city hall-library-municipal auditorium. Others preferred building an arena or coliseum for indoor recreation. Either project would have cost more than \$1,000,000, and the city decided that it had more urgent needs.

Early in 1948, in one of his first acts, Mayor Capeless appointed a School Survey Commission of six members. Acting immediately and to good purpose, the Commission recommended the hiring of an outside firm of professional educational consultants to make a city-wide survey of school facilities. After wide and rather heated debate, the recommendation was adopted, and the city engaged the New York firm of Engelhardt, Engelhardt, and Leggett.

Even wider and more heated debate greeted the Engelhardt Report,\* submitted early in 1949. The *Eagle* devoted a special supplement to it, saying that the "report should be studied by every adult in Pittsfield; ignorance of its findings and recommendations can result in decisions damaging beyond repair to the future of our children."

To say the least, the report took the city's breath away. It recommended a ten-year school construction and improvement program to cost \$11,288,750—a staggering sum. It found many school buildings obsolete and recommended their abandonment in this order—Briggs, Central, Coltsville, Morewood, Nugent, Peck's Road, Read, and Stearns schools by 1952; Rice and Russell by 1955; Redfield and Tucker by 1956. Some of these buildings were a century old. But Pittsfield was not prepared to write all of them off as useless. Indeed, most of these schools are still in use.

The report recommended the building of a new \$5,000,000 high school at Springside Park. The handsome high school building on East Street, opened in 1932 and long the city's pride, should be used mainly as a junior high school, partly as an elementary school, and partly for School Department offices.

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\*See also pages 291-292.



The city was almost unanimously against this proposal, even in view of the admitted fact that the existing building was overcrowded and would become more so every year.

The least controversial part of the Engelhardt Report was the recommendation that elementary schools be built in two rapidly growing sections of the city where there had been no schools before—the outer Elm Street neighborhood to the southeast, and the Allengate area out Dalton Avenue to the northeast.

With public discussion raging on the school building problem, the matter came before the city's Capital Outlay Committee, created in 1944 and consisting ex-officio of the members of the Planning Board, the president of the City Council, and the City Auditor.

Considering all aspects of the problem—educational, financial, and political—the Capital Outlay Committee, with Frederick M. Myers as chairman, recommended (1) the construction of two new junior high schools, one in the north section of the city and the other in the south, each to accommodate 1,000 students. This would, for the first time, bring together in their own proper buildings junior high school students. At the same time, it would release space in the elementary schools and relieve overcrowding in the lower grades.

The committee recommended (2) a \$750,000 addition to the senior high school. This has not been built. Third, the committee recommended the construction of three elementary schools. The estimated cost of the whole program exceeded \$6,000,000. As state aid would supply a third of the funds, the cost to Pittsfield would have been \$4,410,000.

As there was little question about the need for new elementary schools, more than \$1,000,000 was soon appropriated to construct three of these—Allengate (350 pupils) in the northeast section, Egremont (250 pupils) in the southeast section, and Highland (125 pupils) to replace the century-old Peck's Road School in the northern section. A School Building Commission of eleven members, headed by Franz X. Brugger, a retired GE executive, was appointed to administer the construction program.

In September 1951, for the first time since 1926, some of Pittsfield's younger children entered new schools that were up-to-date in every respect—large windows, fluorescent lighting, sound-proofed walls, movable desks and chairs, cafeterias, health rooms, gymnasium-auditoriums, and facilities for radio, moving pictures, and other modern educational aids. The schools were designed to provide children with plenty of space for work and play.

But one of them, Egremont, had scarcely been opened when School Superintendent Russell pointed to the need of enlarging it because of the rapid growth of population in the outer Elm Street area. Late in 1954, steps were taken to add four classrooms and a kindergarten to the school.

In addition to new construction, an extensive program was undertaken to renovate the older elementary schools. The initial experiment in modernizing two rooms at Plunkett School was so successful that the improvements made there served as a model for changes in all the schools. As a result, children enjoyed better lighting, better sanitation, greater fire protection, and more attractive surroundings.

Some of the older school buildings were retired—Nugent in 1949, Peck's Road in 1951, Coltsville in 1951, and Read in 1953. Since 1916, eight of the older elementary schools had been displaced and closed.

If the need for some new elementary schools was generally recognized, the proposal to build two new junior high schools at a cost of \$4,000,000 was not so readily accepted. Many felt that the city could not afford this—that the old junior high schools, however inadequate and overcrowded, would have to do for the present.

Mayor Capeless, the Parent-Teacher Association, and many civic groups strongly favored the junior high school building program. The City Council was deadlocked about it. The matter was submitted to the voters at the 1949 municipal election in the form of this rather ambiguous question:



Shall an act passed by the state legislature in 1949, entitled "An act authorizing the city of Pittsfield to borrow money for school purposes," be accepted?

The voting machines registered 7,175 in favor, 3,855 against, and 7,477 blanks. What the large number of blanks signified was anybody's guess.

In any case, work on the junior high school project went ahead rapidly, stimulated by a remarkable degree of community participation. Springside Park was chosen as the site of North Junior High School. Land on Pomeroy Avenue was acquired for South Junior High School. An expert firm of school architects, Perkins and Will of Chicago, was engaged to design the buildings. Teachers were asked to participate in the planning by making recommendations for educational requirements and specifications.

A Junior High School Planning Council of some fifty members—half being non-educators nominated by the Parent-Teacher Council, the other half being junior high school teachers, supervisors, and principals—was organized to discuss both building and curriculum questions.

The city engaged experts from the Harvard Graduate School of Education to review and make recommendations on junior high school curricula. The center of wide and lively discussion, the Harvard Report criticized junior high school education as being too departmentalized. It urged "integration" of studies by the adoption of a "core" curriculum, which has been done in part.

Contracts for constructing the new buildings were let to the lowest bidders, two Pittsfield firms—Carroll, Verge and Whipple for the North, and George E. Emerson Inc. for the South building. Construction proceeded on schedule. Teaching staffs were transferred from the junior high schools to be discontinued, and in September 1953, the junior high school students of the city entered their modern buildings, at once efficient and very attractive, designed in a semi-campus arrangement.

In their first year of operation, with about 1,000 pupils in both North and South, the buildings were filled to within 6

per cent of capacity. In the second year, they were operating at 7 per cent over capacity.

Pittsfield thus shared the unhappy experience of many other communities where new schools were built only to have them outgrown within a few years. To remedy the local situation there has been talk of building a new West Junior High School and of reopening the old Central Junior High School on the Common, boarded up and abandoned since 1953.

In 1949, Pittsfield appointed its first Negro teacher, Margaret A. Hart of neighboring South Williamstown, a graduate of North Adams State Teachers College and Columbia University. The ban against married women teachers was lifted. Since the early 1920s, the marriage of a woman teacher had been regarded as an "automatic" resignation. Teachers' salaries were raised, and the inequities in their salary schedules were removed.

In 1945, Pittsfield had voted more than 4 to 1 in favor of equal pay for men and women teachers. This speeded steps toward a single salary schedule. In 1948, the School Committee decreed that, regardless of sex or of grade taught, salary categories would be based on "professional preparation"—advanced academic training, college degrees, and similar criteria. While somewhat "mechanical" in emphasizing formal academic training and the accumulation of college degrees, and in disregarding individual teaching aptitudes, the new system was certainly superior to the antiquated one it displaced.

This emphasis on teachers' "professional preparation" in determining appointment, salaries, and promotions had immediate results. The percentage of public school teachers with college degrees rose rapidly—in the elementary schools, from 5 per cent in 1944-45 to 41 per cent in 1953-54. By 1953-54, 35 per cent of junior high school teachers and 48 per cent of those teaching in the non-vocational courses of the senior high school had proceeded beyond college graduation to higher degrees.

Pittsfield teachers desiring to advance themselves had long been handicapped by their difficulty in establishing "residence" courses required for a college degree. As there was no institution of higher learning in the city, they had to travel to North



Adams, Amherst, Springfield, Albany, and more distant points to establish residence by attending classes there. This was no longer necessary after 1946 when Pittsfield became a part-time college center. Since that time, summer sessions of the North Adams State Teachers College have been "resided" in the high school, bringing many students to Pittsfield from miles around.

In 1949, a clear reflection of changing manners and *mores*, senior high school students, both boys and girls, were granted the privilege of smoking in the rear areaway, provided they did no smoking in the building, where they had been "puffing" surreptitiously in lavatories and other hideouts.

In addition to the school building program, its largest post-war undertaking, the municipality made other improvements. In 1949, it opened the \$3,000,000 Cleveland Brook Reservoir in Hinsdale on the east branch of the Housatonic. Useful also in flood control, the new reservoir held 1.5 billion gallons of water, more than the rest of the city's reservoirs combined. By itself, it could supply Pittsfield with 8 million gallons a day.

A new \$362,000 Hillcrest Hospital was established off West Street, overlooking Onota Lake. Some 15,000 people attended the opening of this modern 100-bed hospital in December 1950. A \$175,000 Naval Armory erected in Burbank Park became the headquarters of the local Naval Reserve unit.

The city enlarged and improved its system of parks and playgrounds. A tract of several acres in Coltsville, given by the heirs of Harry G. West, was dedicated as the West Memorial Park in 1950. The Blue Anchor Boat Club property on Pontoosuc Lake was acquired, to give the city almost a mile of beach along the lake for public recreation. Spasmodic efforts were made to clean up the banks of the Housatonic and free its waters of pollution. The stench of its waters on hot summer days could be most offensive.

The installation of a new lighting system on Tyler Street was celebrated on St. Patrick's Day in 1949, with a large crowd singing favorite Irish songs. Thirty union painters donated their time and labor to give the City Hall Annex, formerly the

town jail, a new coat of paint—a much needed improvement that cost only \$200, the price of the paint.

To improve its personnel work, the city created in 1949 a Department of Administrative Services, naming as its director Philip C. Ahern, former executive secretary of the Pittsfield Tax Research Association.

A Salary Survey Commission was appointed to study and make recommendations on rates of pay for municipal employees. Most employees had been brought under Civil Service. Jobs “at City Hall” were no longer political plums to be handed out to the faithful by those in power. They could be filled only by qualified people, as determined by examination. After appointees had passed their probationary period, they could be removed from office only for cause.

The lifting of war-time restrictions on automobile travel brought Pittsfield’s traffic problem again to the fore. As in every city, more and more cars crowded the streets, especially in the business area, and parking became an increasingly troublesome problem.

Parking meters were installed on some of the main streets in the summer of 1948. Mayor Capeless inserted the first nickel—“gold-plated”—in a meter in front of City Hall. The one-hour meters kept cars moving instead of idly occupying valuable space along the curbs for hours at a time, or even all day long. While this afforded some relief, it did not solve the problem. In 1948, Mayor Capeless suggested large city-owned parking lots in the business area for the convenience of shoppers and others.

To lessen the traffic snarls in the heart of the city, a new pattern of rotary traffic around Park Square was tried out in September 1950, with a complicated system of lights to control drivers and pedestrians. Some complained that the new rotary pattern was most confusing. It is still in force, however, having reduced accidents and expedited the flow of ever-increasing traffic.

After the war, as conflict between the Soviet Union and the Western powers developed into the “cold war,” Communism



at home and abroad became increasingly an issue in the press and all public life. The Communist issue in Pittsfield came to a focus in the UE trade union locals representing the workers at GE. Under the national Taft-Hartley law (1947), union officials, both local and national, had to take an oath that they were not Communists or under Communist domination if their unions were to be officially accredited as bargaining agents by the National Labor Relations Board. Most trade unionists objected on principle to being thus singled out for "loyalty" declarations.

With few exceptions, however, the trade unions reluctantly accepted the law. The leaders of UE did not. On this and other issues, UE withdrew and was expelled from the CIO late in 1949 and established itself as an independent union. The CIO organized a rival union, the International Electrical Workers Union, known as IUE-CIO. This split placed the General Electric Company in an uncertain and embarrassing position between the two unions.

To clarify matters, the company asked the National Labor Relations Board to conduct an election among the 100,000 or more of its employees in ninety-nine plants to determine which union they preferred to represent them. Each plant voted as a unit.

The election at the Pittsfield plant in May 1950 revealed that the employees preferred IUE-CIO by a large majority. But UE retained control in many GE plants, including the largest of all, in Schenectady, where the local had 20,000 members. A UE local continued to function in Pittsfield, but its membership steadily declined.

John H. Callahan, a local labor leader, born in Pittsfield and once violently denounced as a "Red," rose to the top in the national affairs of the IUE-CIO, becoming a member of the GE-IUE Conference Board which deals with contracts and all major labor-management problems within the company.

The "Red" issue had entered the 1948 presidential campaign. The question of "subversion" at home and of foreign policy in relation to the Communist bloc in Europe and Asia dominated

debate. The Democratic candidate was President Harry S. Truman. The Republicans again named Thomas E. Dewey, governor of New York. Both candidates spoke in Pittsfield just a few days before the election, addressing large crowds when their campaign trains stopped at Union Station. Dewey's reception was rather more impressive than Truman's.

As in 1936, political pundits, basing their predictions upon public opinion polls and their own "expertise," confidently predicted long before the election a sweeping Republican victory. Most of the press agreed. But the people decided once again that it was not "time for a change," electing Truman by a comfortable margin. The Democrats not only increased their majority in the Senate but recaptured control of the House, which they had lost in 1946. Truman carried Pittsfield, Berkshire County, and Massachusetts, winning in the city by a 2,300 majority.

The Democrats staged a major local upset in Berkshire County, winning control of the Board of County Commissioners for the first time since its founding almost two hundred years before.

Business after the war, to the surprise of many, continued to prosper. There had not been, as so generally expected, a sharp post-war depression. But early in 1949, shortly after the election, the economy began to sag.

This caused immediate worries in Pittsfield. With textile sales declining, local mills slowed down or suspended operations. The Eaton Paper Corporation reduced its working force. The Berkshire Button Company, which had established itself in one of the old Tillotson mills in 1931, went out of business. Its buttons, made of bone, could no longer compete with those made of plastics. In the first half of 1949, some 1,300 employees were laid off at GE. Those retained were put on a short work week to spread employment.

Even so, Pittsfield remained relatively prosperous. In December 1949, its average weekly industrial wage, \$61.96, was the third highest in the state, being more than \$10 above the average.



## THE HISTORY OF PITTSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

Yet no one could blink the worrisome fact of growing unemployment in the city and throughout the country as the number of jobless rose to the highest point since our entry into World War II eight years before.

## XI

### *Pittsfield: 1950-1955*

WITH THE ECONOMY SAGGING, the Korean War, which began in June 1950, set the faltering wheels of industry and commerce to spinning once more. It is a sad commentary upon the management of human affairs that prosperity is so often based upon the organized slaughter of man by man, and the massive preparations therefor.

A few hours after the forces of Communist North Korea invaded non-Communist South Korea, President Truman ordered American air and naval units to support the South Koreans in what was officially termed a "police action." Shortly, American ground forces were sent to help the retreating South Koreans. Fearing that this might be the beginning of World War III, Washington quickly initiated a huge rearmament program, with war orders placed in thousands of factories, including the GE plant and others in Pittsfield.

Meantime, in the voluntary absence of the Russian representative, who therefore could not exercise his veto, the United Nations Security Council had denounced North Korea as an aggressor and called upon UN members to help resist and repel the aggression. About a dozen nations responded, offering aid in one form or another. But almost the whole weight of the war fell upon the United States, which furnished more than nine-tenths of UN troops and equipment, placing a heavy strain upon the emotions and resources of the country.



## THE HISTORY OF PITTSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

Within three months after the outbreak of hostilities, four Pittsfield men had been killed in Korea. Scores of local men in the military reserves were called to service. The quota of those inducted under selective service was increased.

In 1948, as the "cold war" developed, selective service had been placed in operation again. All registrants from Berkshire County were listed in the records of a single board, #2, with Leon L. Riche as chairman. When decentralization was effected in 1951, Riche became chairman of Pittsfield draft board #41; draft board #2 was placed in charge of Nelson A. Foot, Jr.

Preparing against sudden atomic attack, the city established a Civil Defense Department in October 1950. With William H. Cooney as director, local Civil Defense called for hundreds of volunteers to undergo police, first-aid, fire-fighting, and other training requisite for leading rescue work in an emergency.

The generally unpopular Korean War was a major issue in the 1952 presidential election. As their candidate, the Republicans named General Dwight D. ("Ike") Eisenhower. One of our greatest soldiers, he had played a brilliant role not only as a commander-in-chief but as a strategist-statesman in World War II. When President Truman declined to run for re-election, the Democrats nominated Adlai E. Stevenson, governor of Illinois. In his campaign, General Eisenhower pledged himself to go to Korea, where the armies of Communist China had intervened, and do his utmost to arrange a truce there on acceptable terms.

In the presidential balloting, Pittsfield and Berkshire County went Republican for the first time since 1924. Massachusetts followed most states in voting for Eisenhower, who was given a popular majority of more than 6,000,000, the largest since Roosevelt's sweep in 1936. But the Republicans just barely managed to win the Senate and the House, losing control of both to the Democrats two years later in the Congressional elections of 1954.

Though the "hot war" in Korea ceased, the "cold war" with the Soviet Union and the Communist bloc went on, keeping

defense expenditures high. Many orders for the direct and indirect support of the military establishment came to Pittsfield, especially to the GE plant, more particularly to its Naval Ordnance works on Plastics Avenue.

As the company's general business was also flourishing, employment and wages at the Morningside plant remained high. In 1953 and 1954, its average payroll exceeded \$1,000,000 a week, by itself a sizeable cash income for any community of 55,000 people.

But the policies of the top GE command had the city worried. After World War II, the company had announced its intention of not expanding its Pittsfield plant. Rather, it would stabilize operations there at a normal employment of 10,000—11,000 people. Even so, three out of five employees in the city would still be working for GE, principally in making transformers and in the naval ordnance shops.

The company had long felt that it played too large a role in the economic life of the city, that the community was too dependent upon the ups and downs of employment at the local plant. Many individuals and organizations in the city—notably, the Chamber of Commerce and the Pittsfield Industrial Development Company—agreed with this, recognizing the need of creating a broader economic foundation based upon diversified industry.

In 1952, General Electric announced expansion plans, which it carried out, for building a new \$25,000,000 plant in Rome, Georgia, to make medium-sized power transformers, transferring some Pittsfield personnel there.

Local trade union leaders, especially those of the IUE-CIO locals, were joined by many working people and small businessmen in assailing this as another "flight" of industry from New England to the South where, with little unionization, general wage scales were lower. The cry of "runaway" went up again in 1955 when the company reported that it would build another transformer plant in the South, in Hickory, North Carolina, for the manufacture of small transformers.

To these critics the company replied that it was not "fleeing"



Pittsfield, that it had too large an investment to abandon, that it needed additional facilities to meet competition in transformer manufacture, that in building elsewhere it was carrying out its announced policy of not expanding the local plant above what it regarded as its most practical level of operation.

As evidence that it had no idea of abandoning or reducing manufacturing facilities for transformers at the Pittsfield works, General Electric cited the many great improvements and expansions recently made there:

In 1949, a \$2,000,000 high voltage laboratory and a \$1,200,000 receiving building; in 1950, a \$3,500,000 power transformer test building; in 1951, a high voltage bushing building, a wire building, and a tube rolling building at a combined cost of \$9,800,000; in 1952, a \$1,200,000 distribution transformer shipping building and a \$200,000 outdoor conveyor; in 1954, the world's largest industrial Sound Laboratory and major additions to the power transformer tank shop and other facilities at a combined cost of more than \$6,500,000.

All told, this six-year program for modernizing and expanding the Morningside works represented an investment of more than \$24,000,000—the cost of a good-sized new plant—and brought GE operations in Pittsfield to a new high efficiency. During 1954, employment at the plant averaged 10,600.

In 1955, GE announced that the manufacture of industrial heating apparatus in Pittsfield would be moved to Shelbyville, Indiana. The local plant used for such manufacture, a large four-storied brick building on Columbus Avenue, was given to the Pittsfield Industrial Development Company to aid the latter in its efforts to bring new manufacturing concerns to the city and thus diversify its industry—a goal recognized by the community generally as a most desirable one.

During the war and post-war years, a number of local business enterprises celebrated important anniversaries. The Sun Printing Corporation observed its 150th birthday in 1950, having roots running back to 1800 when Phinehas Allen founded Pittsfield's first newspaper, the *Sun*, a weekly which ceased publication in 1906.

Another 150th birthday was celebrated in 1951—by Crane & Company of Dalton (which since 1879 has been operating its Government Mill in Pittsfield). The Agricultural National Bank was 130 years old in 1948. The Berkshire Mutual Fire Insurance Company celebrated its 120th anniversary in 1955.

A number of concerns reached their centenaries—in 1944, Holden and Stone Company, the oldest retail establishment in the Berkshires; in 1945, E. D. Jones & Sons Company, manufacturers of paper mill machinery for a world market; in 1946, the Berkshire County Savings Bank; in 1951, the Berkshire Life Insurance Company; in 1953, the Pittsfield National Bank and the Peirson Hardware Company. The latter's store, a landmark on North Street for almost a century, had been moved to Summer Street in 1947.

England Brothers department store, the largest store in the Berkshires, was approaching its 100th birthday, having passed its 98th in 1955.

In 1953, the General Electric Company celebrated the 75th year of its founding by Thomas A. Edison in a small electrical machine shop on Goerck Street, New York, and the 50th anniversary of its purchase of the Morningside plant from the Stanley company in Pittsfield—the beginning of the city's rapid growth and development as an industrial center. Also in 1953, the A. H. Rice Company, makers of silk and synthetic threads, braids, and cords for a national market, reached and passed the three-quarter-century mark.

Other institutions in the community celebrated important birthdays—the city's public library, the Berkshire Athenaeum, its 75th in 1947; the Father Mathew Total Abstinence Society, now the Father Mathew Catholic Youth Center, its 75th in 1949; the Boys' Club, its 50th in 1950; the Berkshire Museum of Natural History and Art, its 50th in 1953; the South Mountain Chamber Music Festival, its 30th in 1948.

The year 1954 marked the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Community Chest, which early in 1955 merged with the Community Council to become the United Community Services of Pittsfield, Inc. In its first fund-raising drive in the fall of



1955 the new organization set itself the record goal of \$350,000, which it exceeded.

The 10th anniversary of the youngster-oldster community Halloween party was celebrated in 1952. The traditional large parade along North Street with floats and with people in costume was notable for the surprise appearance of a huge electrically-driven monster almost 150 feet long. Built by GE men in their spare time, "Pitt, the Dragon," fascinated 30,000 or more spectators as he moved along "rolling his eyes, flapping his wings, and making horrible sounds."

Two well-known figures, long familiar to almost everybody in the city, left public office during the post-war years. After 32 years as chief of police, John L. Sullivan retired in 1947. He was succeeded by a captain on the force, Thomas H. Calnan, the present chief. At the end of 1954, Fire Chief Thomas F. Burke retired. Joining the department in 1912, he had headed it since 1933. His first deputy, Ward G. Whalen, was named to succeed him.

For most local industries and businesses, the 1950-1955 period was a prosperous one. With employment high and wages rising, it was a generally prosperous period for Pittsfield employees, too.

At the end of 1953, the average weekly industrial wage in the city was \$82.14, the highest in the state and considerably above the national average. This stimulated local commerce. New retail businesses came in, including the Lincoln Department Store, part of a national chain, which opened a large store on North Street in 1951.

In the worst fire since the early 1940s, the old Michelman Building on North Street, originally the Burbank Block, burned to the ground in 1954 and was replaced with a \$75,000 structure. Fire having destroyed one of its old mills being used as a warehouse, the Berkshire Woolen Company added a \$75,000 building in 1954. In the same year the city saw the first telecast from its own ultra-high frequency television station, WMGT, which built its transmitting towers on top of Mount Greylock.

The *Eagle* extensively remodeled its triangular building on Eagle Street in 1950 to provide modern editorial and business offices, and installed presses which doubled its capacity. A new branch post office, largely for the purpose of handling parcel post, was built on New West Street at a cost of \$38,000 and opened in 1955.

In 1953, the YMCA spent \$300,000 to modernize its building on North Street. Early in 1955, to raise funds for a new building for the Girls' Club, a drive was initiated under the slogan, "Girls are important, too." The community certainly agreed, oversubscribing the \$350,000 goal by more than \$86,000.

In the summer of 1955, the Berkshire Life Insurance Company sold its home office building at the corner of North and West streets. Erected in 1868, Pittsfield's first large business block, long the home of many institutions other than Berkshire Life, the structure was bought by Frederick M. Myers and his son, Frederick, Jr., at a price said to exceed \$500,000.

Previously, Berkshire Life had acquired a large 23-acre tract on lower South Street, opposite the Pittsfield Country Club, on which to construct a new home office building with plenty of parking space and room for expansion. Until the structure is completed—work has not yet begun—the company will lease its present quarters in the old building.

The Berkshire Mutual Fire Insurance Company likewise announced its intention of moving its home offices from its present building at the corner of East Street and Wendell Avenue Extension to a new one to be constructed on a large plot in the southeastern section of the city, at the corner of Elm and Williams streets—another evidence of the trend of business away from the crowded center of the city.

In 1953, the Northeast and the Mohawk airlines began serving the city, replacing the Wiggins company. The latter had been using four-passenger Cessnas. The Northeast and the Mohawk began using larger DC-3s. Air freight service, established in 1946 by the Greylock Airways, of which John A.



Heaton of Pittsfield was president, did an increasingly large business.

Passenger traffic at the local airport in 1953 was twice as large as the year before. Even so, the Northeast and Mohawk airlines complained that they were operating in Pittsfield at a loss—at least, with no great profit. In the summer of 1955, they announced that they were suspending local service at the end of the year.

Of far more serious concern to Pittsfield and the surrounding towns was the almost simultaneous announcement of the local bus company, the Berkshire Street Railway, that it was drastically cutting its services and would suspend operations entirely at the end of the year unless it were allowed to cure its chronic deficits by raising fares, or curtailing schedules, or both.

An immediate sharp reduction of services went into effect just as the 1955 summer season began. There were no local buses in Pittsfield and to many neighboring towns after six in the evening. There was no bus service at all on Sundays and holidays.

Several smaller bus companies were granted a franchise to pick up passengers along their regular routes through the city. But this was no solution of the general public transportation problem. Curtailed bus schedules were a cause of inconvenience to thousands and a grave handicap for poorer families and for others who did not own or could not drive cars.

A big residential building boom began after 1950. New housing construction reached record heights in 1953 and 1954. This was not due to any large increase in population. The 1955 state census reported that the city had 55,294 inhabitants, an increase of only 1,734 over 1945. The curve in Pittsfield's population growth, so steep after 1890, levelled off after 1930, when its population by Federal census approximated 50,000.

Rather than by population pressure, the post-war housing boom was stimulated in part by high wages and employment, in part by relatively easy mortgage payments afforded by the Federal Housing Administration, in part because there had been little residential building in Pittsfield for almost twenty years, not since 1927.

Between 1945 and 1955, some 2,600 dwelling units were built. Though an apartment house or two was constructed, few of the new units were for rental purposes. Most of them were small one-family houses built for sale, generally having around them enough ground for a lawn, some shrubs and trees, and a garden. Many were of the flat ranch-type design, with all rooms on the ground floor and no basement. Others were adaptations of Colonial cottages, wanting a full second floor.

Built—many units at a time—by developers of large or smaller real estate tracts, the houses were designed, for the most part, to sell at \$10,000 or less. Increasing use was made of prefabricated houses put together in factories in large sections and shipped to building sites to be assembled there.

With householders seeking more space and air and light, the city, always rather compact before, began to spread out widely into the suburban areas, especially toward the northeast, off Dalton Avenue, and toward the southeast along Williams and neighboring streets. To serve the growing population in the northeastern section, a \$1,500,000 neighborhood shopping center was built at Coltsville, opening in 1955, with the two-storied Sears Roebuck store as the largest unit.

This building boom was not an unmixed blessing. The physical expansion of the city placed a severe strain upon municipal facilities and services. The new sections needed streets, schools, water and sewer lines, garbage and trash collection, police and fire protection. Almost half of the houses built in 1954 were more than two miles from the nearest fire station.

To provide the necessary services meant that everybody in the city had to be taxed for them because taxes from the newly developed properties would not match the large capital expenditures for public services immediately required.

“Progress” often has its reverse side, as Pittsfield discovered in yet another instance. Increasingly plagued by traffic problems and by the lack of adequate parking space in the business district, the city adopted the wise pattern it had followed on other questions in calling on professionals for expert advice. A firm of parking and traffic consultants, the Ramp Building Corpora-



tion of New York, was engaged in 1953 to conduct a survey and make recommendations.

Submitted in the summer of 1954, the Ramp report suggested a number of improvements for the better flow and control of traffic. These included rerouting of through-traffic to relieve congestion on busy North Street, the widening of certain main intersections, a new synchronized timing pattern for the traffic lights. These measures were designed not only to facilitate traffic but to reduce the possibilities of accidents to pedestrians and motorists alike.

In one of the first recommendations adopted for the better direction and control of motorists and pedestrians, the city built in the fall of 1955 new raised traffic islands in the much-used intersections around Park Square. Some complained that the numerous islands only made confusion worse confounded. Others welcomed the change. Only trial and experience could determine which of the groups was right.

On the parking problem, the Ramp survey revealed that approximately 29,000 vehicles entered the central district on an average business day. Almost 20,000 of the drivers wished to park. But more than a fourth of them could find no parking space, with the result that thousands were finding it increasingly difficult and exasperatingly inconvenient to do their shopping or other business in the central district.

To remedy this, the report recommended in its major proposal the immediate creation of four large city-owned parking lots to accommodate 576 cars. One of the proposed sites was at the corner of East Street and Wendell Avenue, where the old Peace Party House stands. Another was on First Street, just off East Street. A third was on Columbus Avenue, running through to Summer Street. The fourth comprised almost the entire block bounded by First, Eagle, Pearl, and Fenn streets.

The estimated cost of the project, with the purchase of land the largest item, was rather staggering—\$936,762. If this were financed by a long-term bond issue, the report estimated that the revenues from the parking lots, plus the monies collected in the parking meters along the streets, would pay all costs in

twenty years and reimburse the general fund for the taxes lost on the acquired properties. The parking problem would pay for its own solution, as it were, without any charge upon the general taxpayer.

In September 1955, acting upon the advice of the Traffic Commission, Mayor Capeless submitted a proposal to the City Council that a \$500,000 bond issue be authorized to provide a 240-car parking lot on almost all of the block bounded by First, Eagle, Pearl, and Fenn streets.

The Council favored the project by a 6 to 5 vote. But this fell short of the two-thirds majority (8 out of 11 votes) required for the authorization of such a bond issue.

Shortly, Mayor Capeless submitted two alternate proposals to provide off-street parking in the same block—one for \$90,000, to provide space for some 85 cars; the other for \$400,000, which would care for 220 cars. The second proposal was accepted by the City Council by the requisite two-thirds majority. At the end of 1955, plans for this badly-needed public parking lot were moving forward, but demolition and construction work had not begun.

In 1954, more heat than light was generated in Pittsfield and neighboring communities when the Commonwealth proposed the establishment of a prison forestry camp in the Pittsfield State Forest. It was to serve as a means of rehabilitating and providing meaningful work for not more than fifty model prisoners, all of whom would be carefully screened.

The chosen men—all first offenders—would build roads, do fire prevention work, help fight the insidious Dutch elm disease killing so many fine trees, and generally improve the public domain. They would be away from hardened criminals behind bleak gray walls. They could enjoy a healthy and purposeful existence. Only those applying for such work would be considered for assignment.

With bloody prison riots occurring all over the country, students of the problem and many more besides realized the imperative need for drastic prison reform.



Massachusetts already had one such prison camp, established in 1952 in the Myles Standish State Forest near South Carver. By all reports, both those of the inmates and of residents living close by, the camp had worked very well. Other states had made similarly successful experiments.

The matter of a prison camp in the Pittsfield State Forest came before a public hearing at the courthouse. Those attending from the city and neighboring communities were almost unanimously and quite vehemently against it. Such a prison camp might be very desirable. But it should be established somewhere else—as far away as possible. Because of local opposition, the proposal was withdrawn.

Though Pittsfield was not directly concerned, another proposed development aroused heated controversy in the city and neighboring towns. Early in 1955, a Pittsfield law firm began signing options on a large acreage in Richmond and West Stockbridge, obviously to be used for industrial purposes. There was wide speculation about what was intended. Soon, it was disclosed that a large cement company, the Dragon, planned to build a \$10,000,000 plant near State Line and quarry the limestone it needed in the quiet and almost wholly residential communities of West Stockbridge and Richmond.

West Stockbridge did not object, but Richmond decidedly did. As the company proceeded with its test borings, the Richmond Civic Association made an exhaustive study of the physical and other effects that cement manufacturing would have on the town and surrounding communities. The study led the members of the Association, a large part of the electorate of Richmond, to vote their strong opposition to the cement company's plans—a vote which indicated that Dragon would have little or no chance of getting the permission it needed from the town.

A few months later, announcing that the Richmond-West Stockbridge area lacked sufficient deposits of suitable limestone, the company abandoned its plans for South Berkshire and turned its attention to North Berkshire—to North Adams, an industrial community with several limestone quarries close by.

The Dragon project had wide support in North Adams, but it was opposed by the Sprague Electric Company, the community's largest industry, employing some 4,000 workers. The Sprague company declared that dust from a cement factory would seriously affect the delicate electric equipment it manufactured. When the head of the company announced that Sprague would move out of North Adams if a cement plant came in, that seemed to write *finis* to the Dragon story in the Berkshires.

The echoes of this controversy had scarcely died away when there was a loud outcry against another proposed development—this time, in Pittsfield, on its very doorstep so to speak, right in the heart of the city.

Late in 1955, a local outdoor advertising concern bought the Gas Company building at the corner of Bank Row and South Street, partly for the purpose of placing on top of it some huge billboards, which would overlook Park Square and the historic buildings around it.

When the City Council approved of the advertising company's petition to the State Outdoor Advertising Division for permission to erect these billboards, those who valued historical and cultural tradition and the attractiveness of the center of the city set up stout opposition to this "improvement" of Park Square.

"If we are going to have big signs up there, gaudy by day, garish by night," said one, "we might as well erect billboards around Park Square and close it up. And then we might consider plastering the City Hall and the Library with signs, maybe the churches and the courthouse, and let the Square go at that."

Popular opposition, supported by the City Planning Board, led the City Council rather hastily to rescind its approval of the advertising company's petition by a vote of 10 to 1. When the matter came before the State Outdoor Advertising Division, the company requested a "temporary" withdrawal of its petition. There the matter rested. Saying that he did not know what was meant by a "temporary withdrawal," the chairman of the Division declared that "as far as the Board is concerned, the petition



is withdrawn, and the issue is now dead." But some feared a resurrection.

Other proposed improvements were not quite so controversial, though certain to be subject to sharp debate. Engaged to study and make recommendations on municipal operations and administrative structure, the J. L. Jacobs Company, a public administration consulting firm of Chicago, submitted late in 1955 a report suggesting wide changes in the city government.\*

Another report that gave Pittsfieldians food for thought and cause to look at their pocketbooks was submitted late in 1955—by a Boston engineering firm, Fay, Spofford & Thorndike. The firm had been engaged by the Pittsfield Airport Commission to make recommendations on development of the \$500,000 municipal airport. The report stated that almost \$1,500,000 should be spent to improve the airport's facilities and lengthen its runways so that it could handle 24-hour air service, especially by larger commercial planes.

The report pointed out that 75 per cent of the cost of the project would be borne by Federal and state funds, that Pittsfield's share would be approximately \$350,000, that the suggested improvements could be undertaken over a period of years.

Even so, many in Pittsfield felt that the community had more pressing needs and more immediate use for its tax dollars. In any case, the city had the facts on which to proceed in improving its airport if it decided that resulting economic gains and greater travel convenience might outweigh the cost of the project.

Early in 1955, serving his 8th year in office, Mayor Robert T. Capeless announced his decision not to run for re-election. To succeed him, five candidates entered the lists. The October primaries narrowed the field to two. The highest vote went to John J. Dwyer, a Pittsfield-born attorney, who, as a Democrat, had represented the 5th Berkshire District in the state legislature from 1950 through 1954. The runner-up was Harvey E.

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\*Chief recommendations of the Jacobs Report are listed on pages 248-249.

Lake, a GE specialist in production statistics, who was serving his 14th year on the City Council.

At the November election, contrary to general expectations, Councilman Lake won the mayoralty by a 1,726 majority. He had the distinction of being the first councilman ever to be elected as mayor, the first candidate for mayor ever to win after losing the primary, the first GE employee in Pittsfield chosen to be the city's chief executive.

At the same election, the question of raising the salaries of the mayor and the councilmen—a matter under discussion for years—was placed before the voters. One proposal was to raise the mayor's salary from \$5,000 to \$9,000 a year; the other, to increase councilmen's salaries from \$300 to \$750 a year. Both were adopted.

Everybody agreed that the new mayor would face formidable problems in view of the recommendations submitted several weeks before the election by the Capital Outlay Committee. Again, as so many times before, Pittsfield was suffering from the pangs of "progress." It needed all kinds of improved and additional facilities—schools, water supply, roads, sewage, fire protection, better public transportation.

The Committee recommended an immediate outlay of almost \$4,700,000 to meet the city's basic and pressing needs—\$3,685,000 for public works, \$500,000 for schools, and \$500,000 for a new City Hall, with the work on all of these projects to start in 1956. The cost of them would add about \$2.25 to the tax rate, not a pleasant prospect. Nor was this all. The Committee pointed to the need of spending as much as \$10,000,000 in long-range improvements by 1960.

Still, as the year 1955 closed, Pittsfield had no cause to complain. The city was prosperous and moving ahead. The various departments of the GE plant at Morningside reported high production and sales, and predicted even better business during 1956. Other local industries were flourishing. In December 1955, the average wage of Pittsfield production workers reached an all-time high of \$90.73 a week, the third highest in the state.

All of this stimulated retail buying and the building of new



houses at an unprecedented rate, especially in the outlying areas to the southeast and northeast, but in other directions as well. The city proper was rapidly expanding beyond its once rather narrow confines as people sought and could afford to pay for sun, air, light, quiet, lawns, gardens, and the great personal satisfaction and security of having houses of their own, no matter how heavily mortgaged.

But however prosperous it might be and whatever its accomplishments, Pittsfield knew that many serious questions remained unsolved. It was confident that, in time, it could solve these as it had similar problems in the past.

As Pittsfield approached its bicentenary in 1961, it could look back upon almost two centuries of solid achievement in all fields—economic, social, political, cultural, and religious—confident of its ability to meet whatever challenges might come in the years ahead.

## XII

### *Government*

FROM THE BEGINNING, Pittsfield has enjoyed, for the most part, an unusual measure of good responsible government. It has been remarkably free of corruption and scandal. Perhaps the chief reason is that the community has always had a strong civic pride and taken an active interest in its public affairs, large and small. In such a community, corruption, carelessness, and incompetence have little chance to take root.

Settled as Pontoosuc Plantation, the community had a proprietary government until 1761, when it was incorporated as a town and renamed Pittsfield. As in all old New England towns, the center of government was the annual town meeting at which the voters appeared in person to decide on the proposals before them and to elect officers—in particular, the selectmen, who were the chief executives.

Pittsfield's board of selectmen consisted of three members, who divided administrative duties among themselves in the way they thought best. As the office paid no salary, administration of public affairs was necessarily a part-time job for the selectmen, who devoted most of their thought and energies to their private concerns.

This system continued in Pittsfield for 130 years, down to 1891. Meantime, the population had grown from some 400 to more than 17,000. The old town government obviously did not fit a community of that size with its increasing complexity of



needs and problems. Pittsfield voted in 1890 to incorporate itself as a city.

The new charter provided for a mayor and two legislative bodies—a Board of Aldermen of seven members, one elected in each of the seven wards; and a Common Council of fourteen members, two from each ward. The term of office for all of these was one year. A School Committee of fourteen members, two elected in each ward, was established. The members held office for two years, but not all were elected at once. Their terms were staggered so that only seven were elected at a time.

The old autonomous Fire District covering just the center of the city was abolished. Its buildings and apparatus passed to a new city fire department, with George W. Branch as the first chief. A paid staff of regular firemen was recruited. Previously, fire-fighting had been done by volunteer companies.

The police department was reorganized and enlarged, with John Nicholson as chief. The other larger departments were placed in charge of boards or commissions, usually consisting of three members. Frequent changes in the boards did not promote efficiency. Still, the new city charter, whatever its defects, gave the community a better instrument of government than it had had.

In 1916, at a celebration of the 25th anniversary of the city's incorporation, Charles E. Hibbard, who had been the city's first mayor, took occasion to point out the many inadequacies of the 1891 charter, declaring that it was already obsolete.

Authority and responsibility were too diffused for efficient and economical administration. In matters of policy and expenditures, the mayor, the councilmen, and the aldermen were often at loggerheads, which caused delay and confusion. There were too many elected officials, almost down to dog-catcher. Officers should be elected for two years instead of one.

Many others levelled criticisms at the charter, urging an immediate change. But this question was not to be resolved for some years yet. In 1927, however, elections were made biennial instead of annual. This assured greater continuity of policy and

administration, and did away with the expense and rather needless diversions of an election every fall.

In 1934, having been submitted to the voters and adopted by a large majority, a new city charter went into effect, and has been little changed since. The charter provided for elections every two years and stipulated that all candidates should run on a nonpartisan basis, without party label, on the ground that "Democrat" or "Republican" meant little in municipal affairs.

Abolishing the old Board of Aldermen and the Common Council, the charter substituted a single City Council of eleven members—one elected by each of the seven wards, and four elected at large on a city-wide basis. The School Committee was reduced from fourteen to seven members, one from each of the wards, to serve staggered four-year terms. The number of elective officers was drastically reduced, the city clerk being the only other elected official.

The three-member boards which had been directing such larger departments as Public Works, Public Welfare, and Public Health were abolished. Each of these departments was placed under a single commissioner, appointed by the mayor with the approval of the City Council. All other department heads and chief officials were similarly appointed with the exception of the city solicitor, whom the mayor named with or without the City Council's approval. The mayor could remove any appointees if the majority of the Council agreed.

In addition to his large appointive powers, the mayor could veto the acts of the City Council. To override the mayor's veto, a vote of at least eight of the Council's eleven members was required. Under this "strong mayor" form of government, the powers of the Council were further restricted. It was empowered to reduce, but not to increase, the appropriations asked by the mayor in his annual budget or in supplementary requests.

In 1944, the city created a permanent committee to study and make annual recommendations on non-recurring expenditures for permanent improvements such as building new schools, reservoirs, and other large projects. Known as the Capital Outlay Committee, it is composed ex-officio of the city auditor, the



president of the City Council, and the members of the Planning Board.

The first Planning Board was appointed in 1913. Like Rip Van Winkle, it slept a long time, waking up occasionally to make brief reports—in 1919, 1923, and 1930.

As a result of studies made by the Board and others, Pittsfield adopted its first zoning legislation in 1927 after rather general complaints that the city was being “marred, damaged, scarred, and hurt” by indiscriminate building construction and fly-by-night real estate developments. The original zoning ordinances were modified as circumstances warranted down to 1953 when a major revision was adopted, based upon a master blueprint drawn by Harold M. Lewis of New York City, consultant to the Planning Board.

In 1953 zoning regulations divided the city into fourteen “use” districts. These were divided into three main categories—residential, commercial, and manufacturing. Areas where light industry and heavy industry might be established were defined. The areas where two-family houses might be built were restricted. The ordinance decreed that in all future building, whether residential or non-residential, off-street parking had to be provided.

For purposes of study, the Planning Board divided the city into twenty-three proposed neighborhoods, each to have its schools, its center of stores, and other concentrated facilities. Studies of three of the proposed neighborhoods have been completed, and more are under way.

The municipality has long followed the practice of calling upon active and qualified private citizens to serve on special commissions appointed to study and make recommendations on important problems and projects. These commissions have often been authorized to engage professional experts to assist them in their deliberations by making surveys and proposals for action.

Among such commissions in recent years have been the School Survey Commission (1948), the School Building Commission (1950), the Fire Survey Commission (1948), the Fire

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Department Building Commission (1950), and the Traffic Survey Commission (1952).

Feeling that municipal operations and administrative structure might be improved, the city engaged a public administration consulting firm, the J. L. Jacobs Company of Chicago, to conduct a survey and make recommendations. Submitted in November 1955, the Jacobs Report urged wide and rather drastic changes.

It recommended a four-year term for the mayor and the members of the City Council to insure "continuity in administration required for more effective management." Pittsfield should have a full-time mayor, or city manager, to be paid a salary of \$12,000 a year. When the report was submitted, the mayor's salary was \$5,000 a year. But at the municipal election a few days later, the voters adopted a proposal to raise his salary to \$9,000, and the salaries of councilmen from \$300 to \$750 a year.

The report recommended a sweeping reorganization of the city departments to reduce their number from 22 to eight. One of the eight would be a newly-created Department of Administration and Finance. This would unite in one integrated operation the offices of the city auditor, treasurer, assessors, tax collector, city clerk (no longer to be elected, but appointed by the mayor), licensing, and voters' registration.

A new central purchasing division would be added to the Department. All accounting and bookkeeping now done in the separate departments would be centralized in the auditor's office. The assessors' office, instead of being in charge of a board of three, would be directed by one person, who would be assisted by two civil service deputies.

The other of the eight departments would be Public Works, which would take over the maintenance of all public buildings and grounds, except parks; Health, which would furnish and arrange for all required public medical services; Police, which would add a new division composed of the inspectors of buildings, wiring, and plumbing, and the sealer of weights and



measures; Welfare, Fire, Parks and Recreation, and Veterans' Service.

Of the "highest possible priority," said the report, should be the building of a new City Hall. The small old building on Park Square was quite inadequate for present purposes and precluded efficient administration.

Also, there should be an upgrading and reclassification of all personnel. The level of starting salaries and of maximum salaries in all grades, from top to bottom, should be increased. The report found that the salaries of municipal office workers were average for a city of Pittsfield's size, but that the pay of administrators and of laborers was comparatively low. The per capita cost of city government, the survey revealed, was \$130.18, about average for comparable communities in the state.

An exhaustive study and a well-reasoned document, the Jacobs Report aroused wide interest and lively discussion in favor and against. As the year 1955 ended, no action had been taken on any of its major proposals.

\* \* \* \*

*Following are the histories of the municipality's chief agencies and larger departments since 1915, with two exceptions. The School Department and the Berkshire Athenaeum (city library) are discussed in other chapters.*

#### *City Clerk and Treasurer*

Under the present charter the city clerk, as remarked before, is one of the two executive officials—the other being the mayor—elected by the voters at large. His term runs for two years. Previously, the city clerk had been elected jointly by the Board of Aldermen and the Common Council for a three-year term.

Since 1950, the city clerk has also served as city treasurer by appointment of the mayor. While the legal identity of the two departments has been preserved, they operate as one under city ordinance.

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The first city clerk elected under the charter in force since 1934 was Harold F. Goggins, who served until 1943, when he was succeeded by the present city clerk, John J. Fitzgerald.

The city clerk has the usual duties of the office, the most important of which is the keeping of official city records and vital statistics on such matters as births, marriages, and deaths. He is ex-officio the clerk of the City Council and responsible for transmitting to the proper officials the decisions taken by the Council and the mayor.

The system of keeping records and vital statistics in the office was completely renovated and modernized as a WPA project in 1939 and 1940, which was of the greatest help during World War II and since. There have been increasing requests for copies of records, especially birth certificates to prove age and citizenship for military service, and in questions of dependents' allotments and defense employment.

It is also the city clerk's duty to conduct elections by making arrangements for polling places, providing equipment, training election officers, and determining and posting the official results of elections.

Voting machines were first used in the city in 1941, when twelve rented machines were tried in Ward 2. The experiment proved to be so satisfactory that a purchasing program was started the next year. In 1946, Pittsfield became the first city in the Commonwealth to vote entirely by machine.

Curiously, one of the first companies making such machines, the Triumph Voting Machine Company, established itself in Pittsfield in 1904, moving its operations ten years later to Jamestown, New York.

### *City Solicitor*

As City Solicitor Paul A. Tamburello remarked in the city's Annual Report for 1954-55, the work of his office serves "to drive home the fundamental fact that the city is governed by laws, and not by men."

The solicitor's office is the city's law department. It appears in court as the city's legal representative. It is called upon to



draft innumerable orders and ordinances. It is called upon to interpret such orders and ordinances, and other questions of law. Department heads turn to it for counsel on legal points arising in their field of operations. When an issue arises, the solicitor or his assistant file opinions on a great variety of subjects, ranging from "disposal of city-owned property, both real and personal," to "conducting an antique show on Sunday."

As previously observed, the City Solicitor is appointed by the mayor. Unlike other department heads, however, he does not have to have for his appointment the approval of a majority of the City Council.

### *Public Works*

Among other duties, the Department of Public Works has charge of the city's water-works, streets, sidewalks, bridges, drains, gutters, catch basins, sewers, and the collection and disposal of garbage and trash. From 1916 to 1934 its activities were directed by a Board of Public Works of three members, elected by the voters at large.

Between 1916 and the onset of the Depression in 1930, the city's rapid growth severely taxed the department's ability to provide water mains, sewage disposal, streets, and other necessary public facilities for the increased population. The Public Works budget, which had been \$478,500 in 1916, rose to more than \$1,000,000 in 1930.

In this period, motor vehicles replaced most of the department's teams and wagons. In 1926, the department bought its first heavy tractor snow-plows—four of them—and soon added a snow-loader. It built a new municipal garage and yard on West Housatonic Street, still in use. It widened the West Housatonic railroad underpass near by, greatly reducing traffic hazards at that point. In 1928, to help relieve growing unemployment, it spent \$15,000 to grade the city dump, hiring "idle men with families" who were rotated on the job.

The next year, for the first time since 1914, water had to be pumped from Onota Lake to relieve an acute shortage. Pittsfield has always been rather wasteful of water. Every year since 1891,

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the installation of water meters has been recommended—a question still being debated.

During the 1930s, with business bad and tax revenues declining, the department had its budget slashed, which greatly reduced its regular working staff. But much maintenance and construction work was accomplished by using the unemployed on the local and Federal relief rolls.

Pittsfield's drinking water was chlorinated in 1934 as advised by the State Health Department. Three large permanent improvements were constructed, with Federal grants supplying almost half the cost—the Sand Wash Brook Reservoir, adding more than 250,000,000 gallons to the city's water supply; a large addition to the sewage treatment plant; three new bridges on Pomeroy and Columbus avenues and Lakeway Drive.

Under the charter that went into force in 1934, the old three-member annually-elected Board of Public Works was abolished and the department placed under a single commissioner, appointed by the mayor with the approval of the City Council. The first commissioner, Arthur B. Farnham, remained in office till 1940, when he was succeeded by Leon H. Reed, who had been deputy commissioner.

World War II brought a curtailment of activities because of the acute shortage of labor and materials. Not much more than maintenance of existing facilities could be accomplished, though water and sewer lines were extended. A firm of consulting engineers was asked to review its 1931 report on the city's water problems.

Submitted in 1944, this revised report laid out a plan for water resources development designed to match both the needs and pocketbooks of the taxpayers. The report stressed the advisability of installing water meters to prevent wastage, for Pittsfield's consumption of water—7,360,000 gallons a day—was far higher than for most cities of its size. In 1945, water from Onota Lake, an auxiliary supply, had to be pumped into the system for nine months of the year.

After World War II, though labor and materials were still in short supply, it was possible to undertake new large public



works. Some were constructed under private contract. A special Board of Water Commissioners, with William A. Whittlesey 2nd as chairman, was appointed by Mayor Fallon in 1945 to direct the building of the Cleveland Brook reservoir, the biggest water project ever undertaken by the city.

Completed in 1950, the reservoir held 1.5 billion gallons, more than all of the city's other reservoirs combined, assuring the community—for the present, at least—an ample water supply. This allowed beautiful Onota Lake, no longer needed as an auxiliary supply, to be used once again for its proper purposes of recreation and sport.

A large new \$500,000 incinerator was completed in 1948. It had long been the function of Public Works to collect garbage. Now the department was delegated to collect burnable rubbish and food containers, creating a new Sanitation Division to do this work.

The incinerator proved to be very expensive to run and keep in repair. Tests proved that a much cheaper and more efficient way of disposal was by the land-fill method. The city now uses this method almost entirely, so that its new incinerator stands a bleak monument to "Progress." Some have suggested converting it to make black-top for use on Pittsfield's streets and roads.

In 1954, through the efforts of the local Civil Defense agency, the department was equipped with radio, which is used to direct vehicles, saving time on the road and increasing the efficiency of operations.

The post-war commissioners of Public Works have been Canfield S. Dickie (1946-47), Archibald K. Sloper (1948-49), Robert L. McLellan (1950-52), and Morris E. Lundberg, who resigned early in 1956 to enter private business, being succeeded by a career man in the department, John F. Daniels.

### *Public Health*

In Pittsfield, as throughout the nation, the development of modern medicine, especially after World War I, has focused increasing attention upon matters of public health and sanitation. It has emphasized the importance of preventive measures

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to minimize the incidence and spread of disease. Immunization against more diseases was developed by the discovery of new vaccines and other means. New and stricter sanitary codes were written and enforced. Infant mortality decreased, as did the deaths of women in childbirth. Certain communicable diseases like diphtheria, once a scourge, had all but disappeared by 1955.

In 1916, the city's public health work was carried on by a clerk, a nurse, and a part-time sanitary inspector under the direction of a Board of Health of three members. The department was chiefly concerned with routine checking for possible sanitary code violations, inspection of slaughtered animals, and the control of tuberculosis through the registration of cases and the hospitalization of those for whom such care could not be provided by private means.

The severe influenza epidemic that broke out late in 1918 and swept the country claimed some 400 lives in Pittsfield within a few weeks and sent 10,000 or more to their beds with more or less serious infections. All ordinary health and medical facilities and services, both public and private, were overwhelmed by the demands made upon them. Much of the care for the stricken had to be performed by volunteers, and Pittsfield's response to the call for volunteers was exceptional.

The crisis made the city realize that it had no proper health department to deal with such an emergency. As a consequence, it engaged Dr. A. L. Stone, trained at the Harvard School of Public Health, to establish a modern health department. Sanitary inspectors were placed upon a full-time Civil Service basis. A full-time inspector of slaughtering was employed. The nurses of the School Department were transferred to the Health Department, and their duties were soon extended to include care of the children in the parochial schools.

Upon Dr. Stone's resignation, he was succeeded in 1923 by Dr. Willys M. Monroe, who headed the department for more than thirty years except for a leave of absence during World War II.



Under Dr. Monroe, who had been doing yellow fever work with the Rockefeller Foundation, the Health Department took new steps to control and prevent such communicable diseases as diphtheria, scarlet fever, smallpox, typhoid fever, and tuberculosis. The state law requiring vaccination of the young against smallpox had so many loopholes that not half the children were being vaccinated.

The local situation was complicated by the fact that several doctors in the city did not believe in vaccination, and were willing to furnish exemption certificates. By making these certificates valid for only six months and by offering free vaccinations to all school children, the Health Department righted this situation, aided by the fact that as the doctors opposed to vaccination grew old, their places were taken by younger doctors thoroughly trained in preventive medicine.

In the early 1920s, very few children in Pittsfield were being immunized against diphtheria. It was procedure at the time that, before immunizing against diphtheria, the Schick test was given to determine if children had acquired a natural immunity to the disease.

In 1924, a campaign was launched to Schick-test and immunize all school children in the city. The campaign continued for some years until the increasing number of pediatricians in Pittsfield made it unnecessary, for doctors began giving infants anti-diphtheria shots as a matter of course.

Up to the 1920s, much communicable disease had been spread by milk. Efforts to prevent this had been plagued by many mechanical difficulties that complicated the problem of making milk absolutely safe and free from germs. Many pasteurization processes, it appears, actually stimulated germs, rather than killed them. During the winter of 1923-24, there were in Pittsfield two milk-borne epidemics of scarlet fever and a milk-borne epidemic of diphtheria. Few of the cows supplying milk to the city had been tuberculosis-tested; only two of the many dairies were pasteurizing milk.

In 1923, with the development of mechanisms to assure safe milk, the Health Department intensified its efforts to enforce

the pasteurization regulation. Some in the city opposed this, challenging the authority of the department until the State Supreme Court handed down a decision upholding its authority to enforce pasteurization.

Area-testing of cows for tuberculosis began at this time, with the aid of the local Health Department. Berkshire County soon became a modified accredited area as a source of milk. Within a few years, bovine tuberculosis disappeared in the area. By 1930, most people in the city accepted pasteurization as a boon.

In the matter of immunization, more of those ill with tuberculosis were willing to go to sanatoria, thus checking the spread of that infection. Children in larger numbers were immunized against diphtheria, though most of this work continued to be done by the Health Department on its own initiative.

During the Depression in the 1930s, the budget of the Health Department was cut, but its work went on. The local death rate, tuberculosis rate, and infant mortality rate steadily declined. Cases of typhoid, smallpox, and diphtheria became exceedingly rare. As more young pediatricians established practice in the city and immunized children as a routine part of their service, the detailed "case" work of the Health Department declined.

In 1928, a Health Department laboratory had been established in the basement of City Hall, under the direction of Miss Eleanor A. Fraser, who had been working at the Bender Laboratory in Albany. The laboratory was moved in 1940 to more adequate quarters in the new Police and Welfare Building.

At first, the main work of the laboratory was the examination of slides and cultures. But as communicable diseases decreased, increasing emphasis was given to the examination of water, milk, and food-handling establishments. The State Health Department has given the laboratory a rating of "excellent."

During Commissioner Monroe's duty in the Army from early in 1941 to the summer of 1946, he was replaced first by Dr. Harry B. Franchere and later by Dr. John W. Trask, a retired general officer of the U. S. Public Health Service. Meantime, Miss Frances M. Tebeau had acted as commissioner.



During World War II years, mosquito control was transferred from the city to a county organization. After the city had built an incinerator, control of garbage disposal was removed from the Health to the Public Works Department.

In the post-war period, the Health Department moved closer to its objective of wiping out communicable disease, especially diphtheria, tuberculosis, and the typhoid dysenteries. These all but disappeared in Pittsfield. There were no deaths in the city from communicable disease in 1954, and only one in 1955—from meningitis—a splendid record.

Because of general prosperity, higher living standards, and better health measures, there was scarcely to be seen in the city a deformed, ill-nourished, or under-developed child. Control of disease played a major role in extending the average life span. In 1954, more than 10 per cent of Pittsfield's population consisted of persons aged 65 or more.

At the end of 1955, completing his 34th year of service, Commissioner Monroe retired. Dr. Harold Stein, a practicing physician in the city, formerly the Berkshire County officer of the State Health Department, was named as health commissioner, taking office the day after Dr. Monroe's retirement.

### *Public Welfare*

Little emphasis was placed upon public assistance programs in the city until the later 1920s. Up to that time, the Board of Public Welfare was chiefly concerned with operation of the City Farm, later known as the City Infirmary through changes in legislation. The City Farm was a euphemism for the old-time poor farm, or poor house.

During World War I, there was a drop in the cost of administering the General Relief program, known in those days as Outside Poor. It was customary at the time to publish the names of all persons receiving any form of public assistance, including those receiving Mothers' Aid for the care of dependent children. In fact, if not in theory, it was a practice to humiliate those in dire need and "inspire" them to greater efforts in their own behalf.

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Frequent controversies stirred the meetings of the Board of Public Welfare regarding "settlements" of people who applied for public aid. In some cases, aid was not granted until the applicant's settlement was determined. Those associated with public assistance programs today often wonder what happened to these hungry and often sick people while waiting to have their residential status established. The settlement laws are still on the books, but are no longer used to deny public assistance to those in need.

Because of widespread criticism of the way the City Infirmary was being conducted, there were many changes in superintendents up to 1929 when Mr. and Mrs. William Griffin were made Superintendent and Matron at the institution. Griffin performed outstanding service to the city up to his death in 1945.

The Depression years brought profound changes in public welfare locally and across the country. The first impact of the Depression was broken in part by the welfare programs of various private agencies and other institutions in the city. Notable among these programs was the General Electric food plan, which helped much to relieve distress and hold down the cost of local public assistance.

After many years of service as clerk and agent of the Board of Public Welfare, Albert W. Shaw resigned in 1931 and was succeeded by James W. Parsons. The latter resigned in 1933, and his place was taken by Martin Reilly, chairman of the Board.

During these trying years, it was almost impossible for the Welfare Department to get sufficient funds to engage a trained staff to carry on its rapidly mounting relief work. In 1931, the Unemployment Committee of the Community Fund gave the services of six "visitors" as a pilot program to show the necessity of trained social workers. The Community Fund paid the salary of a supervisor of social workers, naming Miss Ida M. Hull to the post. Miss Hull remained through 1933, resigning early in 1934.

Through this period, the department had only one social worker, Miss Irene M. Sheridan. It appointed on a temporary



basis fifteen investigators, most of whom had little or no experience in the problems involved in properly administering a public assistance program that was growing by leaps and bounds.

The situation was complicated by various programs established by the Congress and partly financed by Federal funds, but administered locally—Work Relief, Civil Works Administration, Civilian Conservation Corps, National Youth Administration, Public Works Administration, Works Progress Administration, and others. While good in themselves, these programs made administrative confusion worse confounded, and upon the Welfare Department fell a heavy load of complaints by the hungry, by the City Council which was trying to devise ways of raising more money when everybody was broke, and by the members of the Taxpayers Association who were feeling pains in their pocketbooks.

In the pinched year of 1933, Pittsfield had acute welfare problems, with thousands on relief, and enjoyed the rather unenviable distinction of having three different Public Welfare Boards during the year, each serving a few months or more—Board #1, with John J. Byron as chairman; Board #2, with Denis T. Noonan as chairman; and Board #3, with Martin Reilly as chairman.

A change came when the new city charter went into effect in January 1934. In place of the Board of Public Welfare of three members, the charter placed the Welfare Department, as well as other larger departments, under a single commissioner appointed by the mayor. Charles H. Hodecker, who had been agent of the Soldiers' Relief Department, was appointed to the post and is still in office.

Meantime, in 1931, the Old Age Assistance law became effective in Massachusetts, being a great step forward in the public assistance field. The first program was very restrictive. To qualify for such assistance, an applicant had to be 70 years of age or older, had to be an American citizen, and must have resided in the Commonwealth for 20 years. Under the Social Security act of 1936, the Federal government joined in the Old

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Age Assistance program, in cooperation with state and local governments. The age limit was dropped to 65 years, and residence requirements were drastically reduced. Payments under the Old Age Assistance program have grown steadily in the city until they now total almost \$83,000 a month.

The Social Security Act of 1936 had a decisive influence on all public assistance programs. It grew out of a general recognition that Federal aid was essential if communities were to meet their problems of unemployment, dependent children, old age assistance, and similar matters.

In the old days, one had to prove almost absolute pauperism to be granted aid. Today, under our more humane and understanding philosophy, persons in need of relief through no fault of their own—for reasons of health, or unemployment, or age, or other causes—are no longer regarded as social parasites, but deserving of help by the community at large through its Public Welfare Department, private social agencies, or other organizations.

### *Police*

Between 1915 and 1955, Pittsfield has had only two chiefs of police—John L. Sullivan and Thomas H. Calnan. Appointed to head the department in 1915, one of the city's most colorful public figures in recent decades, Sullivan served for more than thirty years, down to his retirement in 1947, when he was succeeded by Calnan, one of the captains on the force.

When the old part-time constable system was abolished and a department of full-time policemen established in 1876, the force consisted of seven men: a chief and three patrolmen on duty from noon till midnight, and a captain and two patrolmen for the night watch from midnight to noon. Patrolmen were paid \$1.75 a day.

When Sullivan took command, he had under him a captain, an inspector, a sergeant, thirty-three patrolmen, two patrol drivers, and a part-time matron to deal with women prisoners. The first motorcycle officer was soon added. With the number of automobiles increasing, safety zones were established at busy



intersections, and a Safety First Week instituted, one of the first such campaign weeks in the country.

Increasing attention was paid to traffic control, protection of children on the streets, public morals, and—after the advent of Prohibition—liquor law enforcement. There was some moonshining, bootlegging, and rum-running in Pittsfield, but they were of minor character and nothing like the gangster operations that corrupted so many of our cities.

From the day he took office, Chief Sullivan began agitating for a new police headquarters-jail to replace the old town lock-up on School Street. Almost everybody agreed that the old police station, built in 1879 for \$2,800, was inadequate and a disgrace.

"I notice when the City Council or the Board of Trade have visitors, they do not bring them to see the Pittsfield Police Department. I wonder why?" asked the Chief in his salty fashion. "Are they ashamed of the police station? The City Council asks forty-five men to make it their headquarters; they ask that 3,000 men and women be housed there as prisoners, that 500 tramps be taken care of by the department, that young women charged with minor crimes be confined in the same room with lewd and lascivious women overnight."

A progressive chief, Sullivan urged that the traditional "flat-foot" be supplanted in certain areas, recommending in 1924 that "patrolmen in the outlying districts be equipped with a car owned by themselves and the city allow them a certain amount for the use of their machines. What good is a patrolman on foot? Today is the motor age; good roads, fast automobiles, bootleggers, speeders, automobile thefts, and reckless drivers have increased the difficulties of law enforcement. The criminal of today has the best of automobiles." The recommendation was not accepted, but the number of motorcycle patrolmen was increased.

Hard times in the 1930s brought an increase in petty pilfering and other misdemeanors. But the crime rate in Pittsfield remained low, as it always had, and the department continued to concentrate its activities on problems of traffic and public

safety, emphasizing preventive measures to reduce accidents.

On New Year's Day, 1940, Chief Sullivan's dream came true when the department moved out of the old police station and across School Street into a handsome new brick structure, two stories high, built to house the Welfare as well as the Police Department. Among its special "accommodations" were separate quarters for juvenile offenders, a cell block for women, matron's quarters, an assembly hall, and a target range for pistol practice. There were also two public comfort stations, the only such conveniences in town.

In 1941, as World War II approached, an auxiliary volunteer police force of almost 200 members was organized and trained to aid the regular force in case of emergency. Recruited from all walks of life, the auxiliaries served without pay, principally to control traffic and perform other duties during blackouts when sirens signalled a practice air-raid alert.

During the war years, the number of arrests declined, due in large part to gasoline rationing and the national decree that the speed limit everywhere should be thirty-five miles an hour. Driving for pleasure was banned.

"It was a strange and novel sight to see the streets of Pittsfield barren of cars during that period," wrote Chief Calnan in 1954. "Stranger still was the duty of the police to call on motorists who were visiting clubs, bars, and other places of assembly to remind them that they must take their cars off the street. It is also surprising to recall the compliance and cooperation shown to the police by the public at that time."

In 1944, after years of waiting for appropriations, a radio communications system for the Police Department was installed. This enabled the chief to deploy his men by remote control as situations developed, which greatly increased efficiency and assured a prompt response to calls for help made to the department.

On February 18, 1947, Chief John L. Sullivan retired, having reached the compulsory retirement age of sixty-five. The department was without a chief eight days, during which time



the responsibility of running the department was divided between Captains Thomas H. Calnan and Camille L. Marcel.

This division of command presented something of a problem, for Sullivan's retirement also left vacant the offices of Keeper of the Lockup, Smoke Inspector, and Dog Officer. How these offices were to be filled was a question, which was temporarily solved when Mayor Fallon appointed Captain Calnan as provisional chief. After a competitive examination for the post, the latter received his regular commission six months later, on August 26, becoming Pittsfield's fifth police chief since 1876.

At the time Calnan assumed office, the Police Department budget was \$174,125, and the chief commanded a force consisting of a captain, an inspector, two sergeants, and fifty-seven patrolmen, of whom five were provisional. For a city of Pittsfield's size, this was a relatively small force, which was in part a reflection of the fact that the city's crime rate was very low. A national survey revealed that all crimes reported in Pittsfield during 1947 totalled only 7.3 for every 1,000 inhabitants, less than half the national ratio of 16.9.

The year 1948 brought many developments in the Police Department. With more and more automobiles crowding the streets and the accident rate rising, a Traffic Bureau was created, with a captain in charge from eight in the morning till four in the afternoon, and a sergeant in charge from four till midnight. It was their duty to investigate all accidents and prepare evidence for use in court, to see that all traffic laws were strictly enforced, to study traffic hazards and make recommendations for their correction. For the first time, traffic officers on duty at night were equipped with luminous safety belts and gloves.

At the same time, a Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Bureau was established to work closely with the schools, social agencies, and churches in dealing with youthful miscreants and more serious offenders. The Detective Bureau was modernized. Hours were extended to two in the morning, so that there were both day and night detectives. The records office was modernized, as was the crime laboratory, where new photographic and other

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equipment was installed. The Uniformed Division was placed in charge of two captains and three sergeants, who alternated on duty day and night. Thus there were four special sections, each headed by a superior officer who reported directly to the chief.

Parking meters were installed in 1948, and the Police Department was given the job of collecting the money, keeping records, and repairing meters. These duties were transferred to the city treasurer in 1950, at which time a jeep with a policeman at the wheel was assigned to patrol the parking meter and other areas for parking violations. During the year, the jeep-men passed out 11,549 "tickets"—an unprecedented number.

The department went on a forty-hour work week in 1952. This necessitated increasing the force by a sergeant and eleven patrolmen, but the number of men available for duty at any one time remained the same. Three "civilian" clerks were added to the roster, with the head clerk acting as the chief's administrative assistant, being responsible for payrolls, personnel records, and the records of those arrested.

Appointed by the mayor, 150 auxiliary police were trained by the department and assisted it greatly in traffic control at large public functions. Perhaps of more importance and utility was the appointment of fifteen School Crossing Guards, eleven of them women, who were trained by the department and made a unit of the Traffic Bureau. Assigned to guard children at street crossings near schools, they performed excellently in reducing accidents. Rules and regulations for the conduct of all members of the force were completely revised and adopted in 1953.

In recent years, the department has put increasing emphasis on the professional training of its members. Three of its superior officers are graduates of the National Police Academy in Washington, D. C. Two members of the force are sent each year to the Massachusetts State Police Training Academy at Framingham. The department itself offers various courses as a regular and integral part of its program, with judges, district attorneys, and members of the FBI acting as instructors.



"Though Pittsfield has its share of localized gambling," wrote Chief Calnan at the end of 1954, "syndicated crime and commercialized prostitution have never invaded this city." The community has maintained its enviable record of being free from major crime, and the incidence of juvenile delinquency is far less than in most cities of its size.

The police budget for 1954 came to \$334,089, quite a difference from the \$509 police budget of a century before, and no doubt worth it in view of changed conditions, though it does not speak too well about the law-abiding characteristics of recent generations. Today's budget also reflects the many additional duties and responsibilities that have been placed upon the police since the old days when a part-time night watchman or two wandered rather aimlessly about the streets of the town, carrying a staff and whale-oil lantern.

### *Fire Department*

The last of the city's fire horses ran in 1915. They had first been used about 1885 to draw the heavier apparatus previously hauled by hand. Horses were hired from livery stables down to 1896, when some were bought for the Central Fire Station. (Built on Allen Street in 1895, this is still in use as the central station.) The other stations were soon provided with their own horses. The advent of the motor age and the passing of the old reliable fire horse marked the end of another era in local fire fighting.

In 1916, with all of its apparatus motorized, the Fire Department, under Chief William C. Shepard, had a regular force of thirty-five and a call force of eighteen. In 1919, the two-platoon system went into effect, with each fireman on duty 84 hours a week. Alarms received by telephone or from the 71 fire alarm boxes scattered about the city were signalled by a "hooter" at the Central Fire Station. Operated by compressed air, the hooter served other purposes. Two blasts on it at 7:45 in the morning meant "no school," usually a welcome sound to the children of the city; ten blasts called out the militia.

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The use of the hooter was discontinued in 1935. Experience had proved that it did little but alert the young fry and send them running—along with some older fry, too—to the scene of excitement where they got under the firemen's feet and "in their hair." The hooter went to the GE plant on Plastics Avenue where it is still used morning, noon, and night as a starting and closing signal.

The 1920s saw a slow but steady growth in the department. By 1930, under Fire Chief Shepard, it consisted of a deputy chief, two captains, five lieutenants, a drillmaster, a master mechanic, a secretary, fifty-two regular and ten reserve firemen. A "civilian" clerk was later added. During the Depression in the 1930s, there was little change in the size or facilities of the department, although several pieces of equipment were bought. In February 1933, Thomas F. Burke succeeded Shepard as chief of the department.

In 1937, a building was erected near the Tyler Street Fire Station to house the fire alarm system operated by the Fire and Police Signal Department. To make way for a new police station, the old building on Allen Street which the department had been using as a hose and drill tower was torn down. As a consequence, the department was without a drill tower until one was built near a new fire station on Peck's Road in 1951.

During World War II years, the fire force was short of men. Quite apart from the fact that most able-bodied young men were in the armed services, there was little inducement for anyone to take the fire entrance examination, for pay in the department was low and firemen still worked 84 hours a week. The department needed more fire stations, more and better equipment.

Immediately after the war, steps were taken to meet these problems. Working hours were reduced to 70 a week in 1947. This necessitated the appointment of 25 provisional firemen, 18 of whom were soon added to the permanent force. In 1952, the proposal having been approved by the voters of Pittsfield in a referendum, the work week was reduced to 56 hours, and the department was constituted at its present strength: a chief



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engineer (fire chief), four deputy fire chiefs, nine captains, nine lieutenants, a master mechanic, a motor repairman, 86 firemen, and five "civilians"—two clerks and three telephone operators.

Under the state's Civil Defense program, set up in 1950 with Fire Chief Burke as regional coordinator for western Massachusetts, a fire-fighting unit of volunteers was recruited in Pittsfield. Trained by the officers of the department, the unit became the Auxiliary Firemen's Organization early in 1951 and is still functioning, assuring the city of more protection of life and property in an emergency.

To study the department's housing and equipment needs, a Fire Department Survey Commission of five members, with Donald P. Gerst as chairman, was appointed by Mayor Capeless in 1948. The commission recommended the building of two new fire stations, and a firm of architects was engaged to study modern fire station design and obtain an estimate of costs.

Acting on the recommendation, Mayor Capeless appointed a Fire Department Building Commission of six members, with Donald P. Gerst as chairman and Fire Chief Burke as a member. Money was appropriated for building two new fire houses.

Both were completed in 1951—one on West Housatonic Street, to replace the old wooden structure on Lebanon Avenue; the other on Peck's Road, complete with drill tower, smoke house, tanks, and other installations for the thorough training of firemen. Some new equipment was bought for the stations, of which Pittsfield now has four. The GE plant has its own fire station and service.

In 1947, a Fire Inspector was appointed under a state law requiring regular inspections to discover fire hazards and possible violations of the fire laws. This work was broadened in 1950 with the establishment of a Fire Prevention and Fire Training program in the hospitals, where the staffs were trained in fire protection and safety, with fire drills held regularly. Fire prevention courses became a part of the Student Nurses Training program.

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In 1952, the Fire Prevention and Inspection Bureau was created and placed in charge of the senior deputy fire chief, with a lieutenant as assistant and a fireman as inspector. Its duty is not only to check public and private buildings for fire hazards, but to inspect oil burners and heaters, and the storage of fuel oil, gas, gasoline, explosives, and other combustibles. In 1953, the bureau made 5,280 inspections. This fire prevention work is perhaps the most important part of a modern fire department's duties.

In 1953, through the efforts of local Civil Defense officials, the department's apparatus was equipped with radio, which has proved to be of great advantage. It minimizes the possibility of error in locating fires, keeps the fire companies in direct touch with the dispatcher, reduces lost time of apparatus on the road, and assures dependable communication if fire alarm and telephone service fail.

The department's major equipment in 1954 consisted of seven large pumping engine-hose cars, a hose car with a 4-inch deck gun capable of shooting 1,200-1,500 gallons of water a minute, a booster pump and hose car, two 85-foot aerial ladder trucks with water tower attachments, and two trucks, one equipped with a pump and a 250-gallon tank for use in fighting grass and forest fires.

Fire Chief Thomas F. Burke retired at the end of 1954. He was temporarily reemployed for five months until he was succeeded by his first deputy, Ward G. Whalen, the present chief.

In 1946, as part of a safe-and-sane celebration of the Fourth of July, the Fire Department sponsored an old-time firemen's muster. With the fire departments and other organizations of surrounding communities participating, the muster has become an annual event, featured by a large parade along North Street, followed by festivities at Wahconah Park in the form of competitive drills, contests, games, and community fireworks.

The latest muster, on the Fourth in 1955, was the most successful ever, except in one respect. Firemen are used to heat. But many of them could not stand the blaze of the Pittsfield sun that day as the thermometer climbed to a record height.



Almost two score of them "passed out" during the parade or at the exercises in Wahconah Park.

### *Parks and Recreation*

Though Pittsfield had previously had parks, recreational areas, and playgrounds, the impetus for its present Parks and Recreation Department may have come in 1908 when Joseph E. Peirson read a paper on "Playgrounds" before the Monday Evening Club.

As a result, the Park and Playground Association of Pittsfield was formed in 1911 with the support of the Board of Trade, the YMCA, the Boys' Club, and the Father Mathew Total Abstinence Society, now known as the Father Mathew Catholic Youth Center. Those who became the association's founders had been largely instrumental in persuading the city to vote "yes" on the 1909 state referendum requiring communities of 10,000 to provide supervised public playgrounds.

Pittsfield's first such summer playground was opened in 1910, on the grounds of Plunkett School, with the city appropriating \$300 for the project and the Park and Playground Association contributing almost as much. The association bought a tract of land on Columbus Avenue for the William Pitt Playground at a cost of \$7,500, raised by loans. In 1912 and 1913, the city and the association cooperated in buying fifteen lots at Springside for use as a park and athletic field. This extended the original land given by Kelton B. Miller in 1910 and 1912.

In 1913, Mayor Moore appointed a Park Commission of five members, with Fred T. Francis as chairman. The next year, the city appropriated \$3,000 and the association contributed approximately \$2,000 to operate playgrounds at Pitt, on the Common, at Springside Park, at Russell and Pontoosuc schools, and at Pontoosuc Lake.

In 1915, the association deeded to the city all of its park and playground properties at cost—slightly more than \$17,000. Though it now withdrew from operation of parks and playgrounds, the association continued to promote and contribute

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to the program down to 1936, when it disbanded, having inspired the city's modern park and recreation system.

In 1916, the Park Commission appointed Louis C. Schroder as superintendent of playgrounds and in 1919, John A. Ford as recreation director in charge of summer playground programs, a football league in the fall, and the development of a winter sports program to include coasting, skating, and skiing. Use of the playgrounds steadily increased from 1916 to 1920.

During this period, the city acquired new parks—in 1916, Balance Rock and many acres adjoining it in neighboring Lanesborough, the gift of a group headed by Kelton B. Miller, publisher-editor of the *Eagle*; in 1917, the Curtin Triangle; Clapp Park in 1918, donated by former Mayor Allen H. Bagg and his wife in memory of her ancestors, Pittsfield's pioneer carriage builders, Edwin and Jason Clapp; and Wahconah Park, acquired in 1919 through the generosity of the Pittsfield Cemetery Corporation and the heirs of George W. Burbank.

Playground facilities were expanded and more parks were added in the 1920s. Rinks for ice skating were built at Clapp and Springside parks. A tract on Linden Street, given by Mrs. Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, was opened as the Coolidge Playground in 1925. The Zenas Crane Memorial Park, in front of the Union Station, was dedicated in 1926, as was the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument in Memorial Park on lower South Street. A new grandstand was built at Wahconah Park in 1927, and a dike constructed there to keep the Housatonic River from eating away the grounds.

During the depression years in the 1930s, city appropriations for parks, playgrounds, and recreation declined sharply, reaching zero in 1932, when the program was carried on by volunteers working through the Citizens' Playground Committee. The latter raised money and hired supervisors to keep the playgrounds open.

After the advent of the New Deal in 1933, the parks and playgrounds saw the greatest development in their history, largely financed by Federal funds appropriated to relieve unemployment. In 1939, for example, the city spent \$2,040 and



the Federal government \$19,210 for recreational projects and for the improvement of the park and playground system, largely using the labor of the unemployed on the city welfare and the Federal relief rolls.

More parks were acquired—Wellesley Park, presented to the city by the developers of the Cooper tract; the James A. Wilson Park, donated by Charles H. Wilson in memory of his father; almost 75 acres adjoining Springside Park, given by Lawrence K. and Donald B. Miller, sons of Kelton B. Miller, the donor of the original Springside Park; more land for Pontoosuc Lake Park, donated in 1939 by Kelton B. Miller. The city bought additional land along the lake to enlarge this park.

After a period of *status quo* during World War II, the park and playground system began to expand again after 1945, when Jackson J. Perry was named Superintendent of Parks and Recreation. In 1947, two full-time staff members were hired—one as director of athletics, the other as supervisor of girls' and women's activities—both being enrolled in the On-the-Job Training Program under the G. I. Bill of Rights. At the same time, a firm of professional experts in the field, the F. Ellwood Allen Organization, was engaged to map out Pittsfield's future needs in the matter of parks and public recreation.

West Memorial Park was given to the city in 1950 by the heirs of Harry G. West, a former mayor. The Lakewood Playground was established in 1951, the Allen Heights Tot Lot and the Lebanon Avenue Playground in 1954. The Balance Rock Park, a city park though situated in the neighboring town of Lanesborough, was deeded to the Commonwealth in 1953 and became a state park.

Under the present Superintendent of Parks and Recreation, Vincent J. Hebert, the department sponsors a wide variety of recreational activities for Pittsfieldians of all ages and interests—from the annual Easter egg hunt in Clapp Park to the programs of the oldsters in the Golden Age Club—in sports, everything from archery to horseshoe pitching and water ballet.

The growth of the city's park and recreation program can be measured in part by the rise in budget figures from \$6,795 in

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1916 to \$166,776 in 1954. During the latter year, attendance at the parks and recreation grounds totalled 265,000, indicating the popularity and wide use of the recreation facilities which the city provides for its people.

### *Veterans' Service*

Established in its present form in 1946, the Veterans' Service Department has three primary functions: to aid all veterans with their problems; to help them and their families obtain whatever Federal or other benefits they are entitled to, such as pensions, hospitalization, and burial allowances; to give financial aid to needy veterans.

The present department grew out of developments arising from the Civil War. After that war, Massachusetts passed laws to give special help to those who had served under arms, establishing an assistance program known as Soldiers' and Sailors' Relief.

This program was administered by town and city clerks for more than a half century, through World War I and down to 1928, when it was realized that a separate department in every community was needed to deal adequately with the increased number of veterans and their many acute problems.

As a consequence, Pittsfield established a new Soldiers' Relief Department to meet the need, with Colonel William H. Eaton as its first director.

World War II brought a vast change in the veterans' assistance program. In 1946, the name of the department was changed from Soldiers' Relief to Veterans' Service, with the Commonwealth paying half of the expenditures made by its communities to aid needy veterans settled within their limits.

Early in 1953, the present head of the Veterans' Service Department, Theodore J. Handerek, reported that one out of five residents in Pittsfield was a war veteran. Roughly, 2,800 of them were veterans of World War I; 7,000 of World War II; and 425 of the Korean War. This spoke well of Pittsfield's response to the calls of the armed forces.



With almost 11,000 veterans living in the city at the end of 1954, the department's potential clientele was one of the largest in the city. In 1954, its expenditures exceeded \$115,100, the largest in its history.

### *Administrative Services*

A new department, Administrative Services, was created in 1949, with Philip C. Ahern as its first and present director. The department deals with the personnel, purchasing, and administrative research activities of the city.

Before the creation of this department, the personnel policies of the city were more or less hit-or-miss, especially in regard to the labor force, which normally constitutes a large proportion of municipal employees.

Up to 1934, when the non-partisan charter went into effect, those in the labor force had little job security, no matter what their qualifications and devotion to duty. If they were registered Republicans and a Democratic administration was elected, they were fired and replaced by Democratic workers—and vice versa. It was not until 1940 that they were placed under the protection of Civil Service, which has been extended to include most municipal employees.

Wages of the city's labor force averaged 20-30 cents an hour before World War I. By World War II, average pay had increased to 60-70 cents an hour. It has since risen to the 1955 rate of \$1.40 an hour. Even so, this does not match the wages paid for similar work by private industry. As a consequence, the turnover in city personnel has been high.

One of Director Ahern's chief concerns has been to bring about a more realistic relationship between salaries paid by the city and those paid by private concerns so that more competent people may be attracted to serve public business.

"Municipal government requires a variety of talents beyond those required by most commercial and industrial enterprises," Director Ahern wrote in his 1952 annual report, "and citizens generally should recognize that the recruiting and retaining of

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efficient and conscientious workers must be based upon a modern personnel system and a realistic salary schedule.”

At the beginning of 1955, the city government had almost 1,080 employees. Of these, more than 500 were in the School Department. The municipal budget for the year provided some \$4,300,000 for wages and salaries, out of a total budget of \$7,490,000. School employees were paid an average of more than \$83 a week—other city workers, an average of more than \$70 a week.

City business and construction constitute the second largest enterprise in Pittsfield, being exceeded only by the GE plant in size of payroll and number of employees.

### *Civil Defense*

With the outbreak of the Korean War and the growing threat of atomic warfare, a Civil Defense Department was organized under state law in 1951, with William H. Cooney as director and J. Bradley Cooper, Jay C. Rosenfeld, and James E. Stevens as deputy directors. Its purpose is to prepare for and deal with not only all possible effects of air attack on the city, but with any major emergency in the community or the vicinity.

Though it has a small paid staff, the department is manned almost wholly by volunteers, operating through a number of divisions—among them, civilian war aid, education, fire, police, technical service, plant protection, health, medical, rescue and transportation, public works, and warden service.

During 1954, the department improved its communications and siren warning system. Its auxiliary police continued to assist with traffic duty, while the fire auxiliaries gave their services when needed.

After an exhaustive study of their effectiveness, the department increased the number of sirens from 11 to 15, purchased on a matching fund basis, with the Federal government and the city splitting the cost. The four new sirens were installed at the Wendell Hotel, the General Electric plant on Columbus Avenue, Mercer School, and the Public Works Yard on West



Housatonic Street. Six other sirens were shifted to new sites for better audibility.

### *Seat of County Government*

Since 1868, when it succeeded Lenox, Pittsfield has been the "shire town," or county seat, of Berkshire County. It was so designated largely because of its central position in the county.

The present courthouse building on Park Square was completed in 1871. An addition in the rear, the Registry of Deeds, connected by a bridge to the main building, was erected in 1928.

County affairs are administered by three commissioners. Elected for four-year terms, the commissioners hold regular meetings every Tuesday at the courthouse. The commissioners in 1955 were John F. Shea of Pittsfield, chairman, Clinton J. Foster of Stockbridge, and James A. Bowes of North Adams. Nelson A. Foot, Jr., of Pittsfield was clerk of the county commissioners; and Harry W. Heaphy of Lee, county engineer.

### *Courts*

Foot was also clerk of the courts—Superior and Supreme Judicial. The Superior Court of Massachusetts sits four times a year in Pittsfield to hear criminal cases, civil cases, and cases in equity. The Commonwealth's Supreme Judicial Court holds its sessions in Boston, except for one day sessions each year in Pittsfield, Springfield, Worcester, and Taunton.

There are six district courts in Berkshire county. That for central Berkshire sits in Pittsfield. Its officers in 1955 were Justice Charles R. Alberti, Special Justice Frederick M. Myers, Clerk Edmund F. McBride, and Probation Officer Joseph A. Torchio, all of Pittsfield. The district attorney of the Western District in Massachusetts was Stephen A. Moynahan of Springfield, with Frank W. Cimini of Pittsfield, Walter J. Griffin of Holyoke, and Edward J. Dobiecki of Springfield as assistant district attorneys.

The county's Judge of Probate and Insolvency was F. Anthony Hanlon of Pittsfield, with James W. Carolan of Pittsfield as Register of Probate and Insolvency. Berkshire County has

three offices for the registry of deeds—in Adams, Pittsfield, and Great Barrington. The Pittsfield office in 1955 was in charge of Harold F. Goggins.

### *House of Correction*

When the county seat was moved to Pittsfield in 1868, the state legislature laid down the condition that the town should furnish a site not only for the courthouse, but for a jail. A site for the latter was provided on Second Street. A House of Correction and Jail was erected there, being occupied late in 1870. In recent years, the institution has been much modernized. Inmates are encouraged to join in healthy outdoor exercises and provide themselves with fresh produce in season by working in the large vegetable gardens around the jail and the seven acres provided for them on the outskirts of the city.

The charges against those committed to the House of Correction range from drunkenness, vagrancy, non-support, and motor law violations to larceny, breaking and entering, and moral violations. Drunkenness accounts for about a third of the inmates. Those convicted of more serious offenses are sent, for the most part, to the new state prison at Walpole or the Reformatory at West Concord.

The average number of inmates a day at the county jail has risen from 49 in 1916 to 71 in 1955; and the number of the staff, from nine to twelve.

Berkshire County, since its organization in 1761, has had 16 sheriffs. John Nicholson of Pittsfield had the longest term of office, serving from 1906 through 1932. His successor was the present sheriff, J. Bruce McIntyre of Pittsfield. There is a special sheriff, Fred N. Cummings of Pittsfield, and four deputy sheriffs.



## XIII

### *Schools*

WITH THE ADVENT of the Twentieth Century, Pittsfield began to grow very rapidly. Its population rose from approximately 22,000 in 1900 to 40,000 in 1915 and to almost 50,000 in 1930, more than doubling in thirty years.

While welcome in some ways, this rapid growth faced the city with many formidable problems. It severely taxed all municipal facilities and services. It especially taxed the capacity of the schools, both public and parochial.

This was not only because the city had to provide schooling for a greatly increased and steadily growing number of children. It was also because children were staying in school much longer than before. Fewer of them were dropping out in the early grades. A wiser public had come to recognize the importance and utility of education in a world daily becoming more complex. Mastery of the three Rs was obviously not enough for a happy life and a successful career in a modern industrial society, which put a premium upon trained skills and broad educational background.

Evidence of this trend was marked in Pittsfield. Around 1900, four out of five children in the elementary schools dropped out before finishing the eighth grade. By 1916, seven out of ten pupils entering the schools went through to graduation, and every year a larger proportion of them went on to

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high school, a practice that has continued down to the present time.

### *Public Schools*

In 1916, the twenty-fifth anniversary of its incorporation as a city, Pittsfield had about 5,400 children attending its twenty-one elementary schools. Eight of the school buildings had been constructed since 1900—Bartlett (1910), Crane (1913), Dawes (1907, 1914), Mercer (1904), Nugent (1910), Plunkett (1909), Pomeroy (1914), and Rice (1890, 1907). These new and larger buildings provided almost two thirds—104 out of 166—of the classrooms in the elementary schools.

Most of the older buildings badly needed paint and repairs, as was pointed out repeatedly by Superintendent of Schools Clair G. Persons, who had taken office in 1910. Four of the old schoolhouses were pre-Civil War, dating back to the 1850s. Five of them consisted of a single classroom in which pupils of many grades sat together and were taught, as best she could, by one teacher.

All of the buildings, new and old, suffered because the city did not appropriate sufficient funds for proper maintenance. Two buildings erected in 1896 had not had a coat of paint or varnish since their completion. The window glass in a newer building was falling out for want of putty and paint.

In the elementary schools there were 188 teachers, all of them women. With few exceptions, they were graduates of the normal schools which were not entitled to grant degrees. Some were graduates of Pittsfield's own training school for teachers, which had operated from 1880 to 1905, supplying most of the city's teachers of the day. For their labors and their harassments by children and parents alike, the teachers received meager salaries ranging from \$400 to \$800 a year. Still, it was some improvement over the \$16 a month that teachers got back in 1858.

In 1919, after World War I, salaries were increased to a range of \$700-1,080 a year. Meanwhile, local teachers had won some measure of job security for the first time, freeing them



from the fear of arbitrary dismissal. A tenure law adopted in 1916 provided that a two thirds vote of the entire School Committee was required to discharge a teacher who had been re-appointed after serving three probationary years.

A closer bond between the teachers and the community at large, the source of much fruitful collaboration, was formed in 1914 when the first unit of the now strong and influential Parent-Teacher Association was organized at Dawes School.

By 1916, children in the elementary schools were being promoted from grade to grade without examination if they had made progress during the year. In abolishing the intricate and rigid examination system previously used to determine promotion or non-promotion, Superintendent Persons had stated the issue clearly:

"Whether our public school system is to be a relentless machine through which our children are to be passed and ground out like so much grain, or whether it shall be an institution which considers each pupil as a separate problem for whose individual development we are responsible . . . According to our theory of administration, in a properly organized school system every child except the hopelessly deficient should make normal progress through the grades."

In the high school there were forty-six teachers—fifteen men, and thirty-one women. All had college degrees. Salaries for men teachers ranged from \$800 to \$1,400 a year; for women teachers, from \$640 to \$1,000 a year. In 1919, salaries were increased to a range of \$1,000—1,800 a year for men, and \$960—1,280 a year for women teachers.

Attendance at the high school had been growing even faster than the rapid rise of the city's population as a whole. Enrollment had doubled in the 1890s. It doubled again from 1900 to 1910 and then shot up even faster, again doubling in the 1910—1915 period. In September 1915, almost 1,100 students were enrolled in the high school on the Common.

A brick structure with three floors, the high school building was relatively new, having been completed in 1898. Adequate for its day, it had long since been outgrown, being intolerably

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overcrowded in spite of the fact that every foot of space was put to use. Classes were held in the basement, and even in the corridors. This only partially relieved the congestion, and in 1914 a hundred students were transferred to a late afternoon session. At the same time, the commercial department was moved to the Read School near by.

To consider the high school's problems, the authorities appointed a commission which began what threatened to become an interminable debate on whether to add wings to the high school, build a new one, or do nothing at all. This last, while not formally pronounced, was the actual policy for some years as the discussion continued.

For want of a gymnasium and proper facilities, high school students had no physical education program during school hours. Relatively few participated in after-school athletics. There was a sad want of laboratories for teaching the physical sciences and the household arts. The high school building had a basement lunch room but no cafeteria, and became increasingly crowded to the detriment of pupils and teachers alike. All of this, united with the narrow educational program offered, accounted in large part for the fact that only one of every three students entering high school went through to get his or her diploma.

Appointed in 1911, Harry E. Pratt resigned as high school principal in 1916 and was succeeded by Lorne B. Hulsman, who had been principal of the high school at Melrose, Massachusetts. Hulsman shared his predecessor's view that the old building on the Common was poorly designed and so poorly lighted that it would be a waste of money to enlarge it. A new and much larger high school of modern design was needed, a project that would entail much more extended debate before it was approved.

Meantime, the new principal took steps to improve and broaden the curriculum. A course in civics and United States history was made compulsory for all students. Four years of mathematics were offered. Courses in general science, European history, Spanish, and community civics were introduced. The



commercial course was extended from two to four years. A student athletic association was formed. School clubs of various kinds were granted periods to meet during the school day.

The question of improving the old high school building or erecting a new one was indefinitely postponed with our entry into World War I early in 1917. The war years were difficult ones for all of the schools. The opening of school in 1916 had been delayed by an outbreak of infantile paralysis, or poliomyelitis. Having opened for a few sessions, the schools were again closed by the Board of Health till November 13, after which the rigid enforcement of state vaccination laws caused more complications.

Then came the winter of 1917-1918, one of the worst that Pittsfield ever suffered. To severe cold and heavy snow was added a coal famine caused by the war. To save fuel, the schools were closed for many weeks. The coal in their bunkers was removed and sold to shivering householders most desperately in need of it. Not many months later, just before the Armistice in November 1918, the terrible influenza epidemic of that year struck Pittsfield. The schools and all places of public assemblage were closed for an extended period.

During the war, children in the schools had participated in selling and buying thrift and war savings stamps, in Red Cross work, in the food conservation programs, in digging and tending school gardens. Older children, those over sixteen, joined battalions for supervised farm work in the surrounding countryside. The schools were used in the summer of 1917 to teach housewives the latest processes in canning.

The call of men for duty in the armed forces had revealed a shocking situation. Of those called in Massachusetts for the first selective service draft, almost 40 per cent failed to pass their physical examinations because of one defect or another. As a result, Pittsfield hired its first physical education supervisor in 1918, a woman.

"This year we have commenced specific work in physical training and in corrective work," reported Superintendent Persons. "One supervisor gives her entire time. . . . This leaves:

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1,000 high school pupils without any instruction. The entire work is handicapped by the absence of any gymnasium or suitable apparatus."

Persons resigned as superintendent of schools in 1919 and in January 1920, was succeeded by John F. Gannon, who had been serving as assistant superintendent at Worcester. In 1923, after several years in Pittsfield, Superintendent Gannon received recognition of his work as an educator by being given an honorary LL.D. degree by Holy Cross College, his alma mater, where he had taken his bachelor's and master's degrees.

In 1920, soon after Gannon's appointment and under his direction, the School Committee authorized a major change in the educational system—the introduction of junior high schools. First established in 1909-1910 as part of the school systems of Columbus, Ohio, and Berkeley, California, junior high schools had proved successful and been adopted by many communities. Under this system, a child attended elementary school for six years, went on to junior high school for three years, and on to senior high school for the same time.

The adoption of this system entailed a major realignment of curriculum and school facilities. But the junior high schools offered many advantages. They brought together children of the intermediate age group. This helped to create better and broader social relations at the often difficult period of early adolescence. The new schools offered elective courses, departmentalized teaching of a more systematic order, better physical education, a broader musical program, courses in manual and home arts, and the opportunity for youngsters of varying interests to form in-school clubs.

"Strictly speaking," said Superintendent Gannon in commenting on the local scene, "a junior high school should have its own setting; namely, buildings, courses of study, and a distinctive junior high school social atmosphere, with opportunities for pre-vocational instruction, educational advice and guidance. If these were possible, adoption of the junior high school into the Pittsfield school system would be comparatively easy . . . The chief difficulty in installing the junior high school



arises from the traditional courses of study, present school practices, and housing facilities.”

In September 1920, junior high schools were established in conjunction with four elementary schools—Dawes, Mercer, Plunkett, and Pomeroy. Four more were added on January 31, 1921—at Crane, Redfield, Russell, and Tucker schools. The junior high schools would have to wait a long time before they got their own proper buildings.

In 1919, Massachusetts had passed a law requiring that a continuation school be established in every community which had two hundred employed minors in the 14-16 age bracket. The state agreed to pay half the operating costs. The city bought the equipment of a Springfield printing shop and installed it in the Pomeroy School basement. In September 1920, the Continuation School opened with more than two hundred enrolled. In addition to academic subjects, the boys studied printing; the girls, sewing. Courses in woodworking and cooking were soon added.

The Continuation School remained in operation throughout the 1920s. When employment was high and youths could get jobs, the school was filled. When employment was low, attendance dropped off as the young people remained in the regular schools.

Two new elementary schools were built—Pontoosuc (1920) and Hibbard (1924). A third story was added to Tucker in 1926. But this construction did little to relieve the general overcrowding in the schools as enrollments went up and up. Many schools had to adopt double sessions. There was the 8:30—10:30 and 12:30—2:30 shift, and a 10:30—12:30 and 2:30—4:30 shift.

To help relieve congestion, the city turned to “portable” schoolhouses. Two were established in 1925 at Plunkett and Stearnsville schools. Others were added at Dawes, Bartlett, Hibbard, and Crane schools. The one at Crane School was a three-room building, with two classrooms and an auditorium. While the “portables” left much to be desired, especially in

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the sharp Berkshire winters, they at least allowed some of the schools to discontinue double sessions.

Double sessions were soon the order of the day at the high school. The removal of the commercial department to Read School, which in 1920 became the High School of Commerce, and the introduction of the junior high schools eased the space problem somewhat. But the solution was only temporary as the number of students continued to rise. Disappointed that the city had done nothing about the problem, Principal Hulsman resigned in 1920 and in March 1921, was succeeded by Roy M. Strout, who remained in office until his retirement after commencement in 1955. The new principal had been head of the high school at Danvers, Massachusetts.

In 1921, at the request of the School Committee, Mayor Michael W. Flynn appointed a "Five Year Planning Committee" to make recommendations on a city-wide school building program.

With George H. Tucker as chairman, the committee issued a report the next year urging the construction of a new high school on the Plunkett, Holland, and Zander properties at East and Second streets. The mayor and members of the Council unanimously accepted the report. But there was still substantial public sentiment for enlarging the old building on the Common instead of spending \$1,000,000 or more on a new structure.

This largely explains why three years passed before Mayor Fred T. Francis, as authorized by the Council, appointed a Commission on the New High School, with Judge Charles L. Hibbard as chairman. The other original members were Harry C. Crafts, Simon England, Clifford Francis, and Robert F. Stanton. Two more years passed with little done on definite plans.

By this time, the old building on the Common was literally bursting. The commercial department had to be moved back from Read School, which was needed to relieve the overcrowding in the elementary grades at Plunkett School. This necessitated dividing the high school students into two "platoons." One group attended classes in the 8:00—12:30 shift, the other



between 12:45 and 5:15. If the students' complaints were sharp, the teachers' were more so.

Some action was plainly imperative, and a reconstituted Commission for the New High School got to work in 1928 and the project was soon under way. The Commission decided to build on a seven-acre tract at the corner of East Street and Appleton Avenue. Some objected that the choice of this site meant the destruction of three of Pittsfield's oldest and finest houses, including the one famed as the Longfellow House, and involved the levelling of a knoll beloved by the children of the neighborhood. For generations it had been their favorite winter playground as they did their sliding and coasting down its slopes.

But the decision had been made, the old houses came down, the knoll was levelled off, and the new \$1,300,000 high school building began to go up. In September 1931, some 1,400 students entered the doors of their new "home," which was indeed impressive. The teachers and the entire School Department had contributed much to its planning.

A handsome four-storied Georgian structure topped with a white cupola, it contained thirty-six classrooms, six recitation rooms, five study halls, an auditorium with almost 1,500 seats, a well-equipped gymnasium, shower and locker rooms for boys and girls, a large library, proper laboratories for the sciences, a students' cafeteria seating 640 people, a faculty dining room, three typewriting rooms, and other rooms for music and special purposes.

But ample as the new building was, a welcome change from the "mouse trap" on the Common, it soon became evident that it was not large enough. All the students could not be seated at the same time in the auditorium, and after 1934 school assemblies had to be held in two sections.

During the 1920s, the school system introduced the use of intelligence tests (1921), "factory classes" in Americanization (1921), a special class for children not speaking English (1921), a vacation school (1921), a special class for the mentally retarded (1922), a state-aided high school class in the household arts (1922), and school safety patrols (1923). A

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supervisor for the primary grades was appointed in 1923, with Ellen Irons as the first to hold the post.

Between 1920 and 1930, student enrollment in the public schools increased from 6,700 to 8,800 and the number of staff\* from 246 to 375. Teachers' salaries were raised, with men teachers in the high school again favored, earning up to a maximum of \$2,300 a year.

But the average staff salary remained comparatively low, rising during the decade from \$1,250 to \$1,510 a year. Day school expenditures increased from \$391,911 in 1919-20 to \$756,874 in 1929-30. These figures were not quite comparable, for the latter figure included certain maintenance costs that had been part of the Public Works Department's budget up to 1927, and prices in general had risen.

Then came the Great Depression, which ended all thought of expanding and improving the school system for the time being. It was a struggle for the schools even to maintain the educational levels they had reached.

The first depression cut occurred in 1932, when the school budget was reduced \$75,000 below the preceding year. Appropriations for the kindergartens and the Continuation School were eliminated. The School Committee reduced the length of the fall semester and cut teachers' salaries 25 per cent for the period—equal to a 10 per cent cut for the year. As no other city employees had had their paychecks reduced, the teachers felt that the schools were being turned into a "political football."

In 1933, the budget was cut again—almost \$70,000. As in all city departments, salaries in the School Department were reduced 10 per cent. Again, there were no appropriations for kindergartens and the Continuation School. Both had kept going by the transfer of funds from the salary account of the teachers, who accepted an additional pay cut in the form of seventeen payless furlough days in the school year.

At a time of unprecedented social crisis, when small children were feeling the strains of family and community life and being deprived of their usual opportunities, there were widespread

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\*"Staff" included teachers, supervisors, and principals.



and very strong objections to abolishing the kindergartens, which had become an integral part of the school system in 1902 after a long and often bitter battle.

In 1934, under the new city charter, the elected School Committee was reduced from fourteen to seven members. The new Committee, four members of which had served in 1933, decided that the best and fairest method of solving the problems of the schools and of the teachers—or as good a method as any under the circumstances—was (1) to discontinue the kindergartens, which were not required by law; (2) to abolish the Continuation School, in which enrollment had dropped sharply as the Depression deepened; (3) to discharge thirty-three teachers, most of them newly appointed; and (4) to transfer teachers with longer service to positions that were unfilled—all of which was done.

Between 1930 and 1934, student enrollment had not markedly increased, rising from 8,800 to 9,300. The school budget had fallen from \$820,000 in 1931—32 to \$646,000 two years later, a decline of almost 25 per cent. The number of the staff had remained almost stationary. The average staff salary had fallen from \$1,510 to \$1,280 a year, back to the 1920 level.

In 1931, the School Committee had created a new office, assistant superintendent of schools, and to that post appointed Edward J. Russell, head of the science department at the high school. Superintendent Gannon refused to recognize either the office or the appointee. After some legal questions had been settled, Russell took office in 1933 and in July 1934, became superintendent of schools, succeeding Dr. Gannon, who had been ill. Superintendent Russell has been in office since that time.

With Caroline C. Plunkett as chairman, a sub-committee of the School Committee undertook, with Superintendent Russell's technical assistance, to realign the school districts in 1934. The district lines established at that time remained virtually unchanged until the building of three new elementary schools almost twenty years later. As the suspension of kindergartens and other curtailments during the early Depression released a

number of rooms, it was possible to do away with the "portable" schoolhouses, which were sold and carted away, with students and parents and the entire neighborhood rejoicing.

Under the 1934 city charter, the maintenance of school buildings, long sadly neglected, was placed in charge of a superintendent of public buildings. With the close cooperation of the first building superintendent, George C. Beckwith, the School Department began an extensive program for rehabilitating its physical plant.

Old plumbing was removed, new boilers and sanitary drinking fountains were installed, roofs were repaired, fire hazards and structural weaknesses were corrected, desks and blackboards were refinished, the buildings got a coat of paint inside and out at long last. The electric light bulbs in use since 1910 gave way to a far brighter and better illuminating system. The school cafeterias were much improved.

There was also intellectual "rehabilitation." In spite of low budgets, obsolete textbooks were thrown out and replaced with up-to-date ones. Wall maps and other modern teaching aids were placed in the classrooms. The high school's commercial department was provided with modern business machines. Portable projectors for silent and sound films, film strip projectors, and radios became available for classroom use and were in almost constant service. Under the direction of John E. Joyce, Jr., the Radio Guild at the high school wrote scripts and produced programs for local broadcasting station WBRK, as did the radio clubs in the junior high schools.

With all education, from college down, being subjected to critical review and reappraisal during the 1930s, every course in the local schools, no matter what the grade or subject, was revised to incorporate new insights on child development and educational psychology, and the recommendations of academic authorities on cutting "dead wood" out of the curriculum. The giving of standard tests for reading, spelling, and arithmetic became routine procedure. The trend of training was toward the "practical" and vocational.



The city's first advance into state-aided vocational training occurred in 1927 when a carpentry class of sixteen boys was established in the Pomeroy School basement. The first vocational classes contributed to the city's school plant, helping to build the Pomeroy School Annex in 1928 and the Abby Lodge Community House in 1930, later the Abby Lodge School. In 1934, the "general" vocational school moved into part of the east wing basement of the high school.

At Superintendent Russell's request, state educational authorities undertook in 1935 a survey of Pittsfield's industries and recommended that a first-rate machine shop course would best serve the community and its youth in the matter of vocational training. An advisory committee of people with industrial experience was appointed. Machine tools and related equipment, mostly donated, were installed. Competent instructors were hired and in September 1937, the school system opened its first state-aided machine-shop course.

Its growth, though not rapid, was steady. It was attended not only by a growing number of high school applicants but by many of the unemployed who were on the WPA, NYA, or local welfare rolls. In 1940, the machine shop was expanded to include the entire east wing basement of the high school.

The outbreak of World War II further stimulated vocational education. The city bought a garage on East Street, across Appleton Avenue from the high school, and converted it into vocational shops for teaching auto mechanics, machine shop, printing, welding, and cabinet making. Some two hundred high school youths enrolled in the expanded vocational courses in 1941. Students spent alternate weeks working in the shops and attending classes in the high school. By the end of the war, almost 6,000 students, including older men and women, had taken these vocational "war production" courses.

New courses were introduced in the high school on such subjects as "pre-induction" mathematics, first aid, and aeronautics. More emphasis was placed on physical education in the upper schools. Nursery classes, open from 6:30 in the morning to 6 at night, were formed to care for the pre-school children of

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working mothers. In September 1943, after a lapse of nine years, the kindergartens were reestablished. Successful "back-to-school" campaigns were waged to keep youthful workers in class under an arrangement permitting them to continue part-time employment.

The school children of the city played an active part during the war in the campaigns to salvage waste paper, scrap iron, tin cans, rubber, fats, milkweed floss, and other usable material.

"In responding so well to the salvage appeals," remarked the press, "the children not only are satisfying their patriotic desire to play a real role in the war effort, but they are also financing the local Salvage Committee's worthwhile project of sending Christmas packages to each local man in the armed services."

Money from the sale of scrap also went to the Red Cross, the Community Chest, and into school funds for the purchase of much of the athletic and audio-visual equipment bought during the war years. In addition, profits from salvage helped to finance the city's present series of "safe-and-sane" Halloween celebrations beginning in 1942. Sponsored by the Parent-Teacher Association, the School Department, and the Salvage Committee headed by Superintendent Russell, later taken over by the city's Parks and Recreation Department, these imaginatively organized and colorful community celebrations, with a big parade along North Street as the main feature, have become part of the Pittsfield tradition.

The teachers of the city did valuable war work as volunteers in the registration of aliens and of selective service men, and in organizing and carrying out the complicated procedures attending the various rationing programs. Some of these activities, especially those concerned with rationing, interfered at times with the school program, but there was no alternative.

It became plain after the war that the schools were facing a serious crisis. With the birth rate rising, the number of school children was constantly increasing, and there had been virtually no enlargement of school facilities since the opening of the high school almost fifteen years before.



In 1948, as a result of a study of school building needs made by Superintendent Russell, Mayor Capeless appointed a School Survey Commission of six members. Under the chairmanship of Robert G. Newman, librarian of the Berkshire Athenaeum, this commission recommended that a professional firm of educational consultants be engaged to make an all-inclusive survey of the public school buildings. After rather heated debate, this proposal was adopted and the New York firm of Engelhardt, Engelhardt and Leggett undertook to do the survey for \$10,000.

Submitted in January 1949, the Engelhardt Report\* became the focus of wide and often rather acrimonious discussion for months, for years. The Report recommended a 10-year program of rehabilitation and new construction at an estimated cost of \$11,288,750—which staggered not a few citizens even though approximately a third of the cost would be borne by the state under the School Building Assistance Act of 1948. The city would have been wiser if, during the Depression, it had accepted Federal aid to keep its school plant up-to-date, instead of having to pay all at once for long overdue expansion and modernization.

More particularly the Engelhardt associates recommended the construction of a new \$5,000,000 high school at Springside Park, suggesting that the existing high school on East Street be used mainly for a junior high school, partly for an elementary school, and partly for the School Department's administrative offices. Public opinion was almost unanimously against this proposal.

But there was little dissent to the recommendation that the Dalton Avenue and outer Elm Street neighborhoods should have priority in getting new elementary schools because of the recent rapid growth of population in those areas.

Shortly after the release of the Engelhardt Report, the city's Capital Outlay Committee recommended the construction of five new school buildings—two new junior high schools, one in the north and one in the south section of the city, each to accom-

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\*Additional discussion of the Engelhardt Report and its results appears on pages 218—222.

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moderate 1,000 pupils; an elementary school in the Williams Street area to accommodate 250 pupils; another in the Allendale section to accommodate 350 pupils; and the replacement of the Peck's Road School with a building to accommodate 125 pupils. The cost of sites, buildings, and equipment was estimated at approximately \$6,000,000, of which state aid would supply about \$1,800,000.

To administer the construction program a School Building Commission of eleven members was appointed, headed by Franz X. Brugger, a General Electric executive who had recently retired. More than \$1,000,000 was soon appropriated to erect three elementary school buildings—the Allendale, Egremont, and Highland. Educational specifications for these buildings were based in large part upon studies and recommendations made by the elementary school staffs of the city.

In September 1951, for the first time in a generation, some of the city's younger children entered new school buildings with plenty of light and air and space, though the space in one of them was soon occupied to full capacity.

Egremont School in the outer Elm Street section had scarcely opened when Superintendent Russell pointed to the need of a sizeable addition to care for all the children of this area which was being so rapidly built up. Three years later, in December 1954, the School Committee unanimously requested that steps be taken for the construction of such an addition, to consist of four rooms and a kindergarten.

The new schools, as Pittsfield proudly noted, were "as educationally up-to-date as any in the land." Each had a combination auditorium-gymnasium, cafeteria, and health room. Walls, ceilings, and floors were finished with sound-proofing materials which kept noise at a minimum. Classrooms were equipped with new movable desks and chairs, for the day of the old screwed-down desks standing rigidly like soldiers in file was over.

Meantime, an extensive program for modernizing the older schools had been going forward. Fire hazards were corrected and greater safety was assured by a 5-year construction project completed in 1949 at a cost of \$100,000.



Several classrooms in Plunkett School were renovated and used as models of what modernization might do. The old fixed desks were removed and replaced with movable furniture light in finish. Floors were bleached. The old blackboards gave way to green. Walls were painted in pastel colors of high reflectivity. Fluorescent lighting was installed in place of the old incandescent bulbs.

The experiment was so successful and so widely approved that a program for modernizing all rooms in the older schools was started under the direction of the recently-appointed School Building Commission.

The building of the two new junior high schools was a more complicated and controversial business. Some felt very strongly that the city could not afford to obligate itself for the \$4,000,000 cost of construction. When the question reached an impasse in the City Council, the matter was placed before the voters in the 1949 municipal elections. The measure having passed, the authorities moved ahead with their plans for a North Junior High School, at Springside Park, and a South Junior High School, between Pomeroy and Marshall avenues.

Joseph C. Nugent was appointed principal of North Junior High, and Joseph J. Canavan of South Junior High. Both had had experience as junior high school principals—the first at Central, the second at Plunkett. Teaching staffs were transferred from the junior high schools to be discontinued, and new teachers were appointed for such special fields as art, music, science, industrial and home arts, and physical education.

In spite of difficulties caused by the Korean war, the buildings opened in September 1953, to the delight of all the junior high school students in the city, who had never enjoyed proper junior high school facilities, and to the glowing pride of Pittsfield in general. Designed by Perkins and Will of Chicago, a distinguished firm of school architects, the buildings were very attractive and highly practical adaptations of the modern functional style, having a semi-campus appearance through the arrangement of classroom wings, auditorium, gymnasium, cafeteria, shops, and administrative offices.

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In their first year, the new schools were filled almost to capacity. In 1954-55, their second year, they were already overflowing, operating at 7 per cent over capacity—a situation that has overtaken many another American community that has enlarged its school facilities only to find them almost immediately outgrown. To alleviate the local situation, it has been suggested, among other proposals, that a new West Junior High School should be built or that the old building on the Common, closed in 1953, should be reopened as the Central Junior High School.

The developing junior high school program had occasioned an unusual degree of community participation. After World War II, all education had been subjected to searching questions about curriculum, methods, goals, philosophy, and teacher qualifications. The School Committee decided that in remodeling junior high school education, the teachers themselves should have a major voice; that community participation in the study should be channeled through the Parent-Teacher Council; that an expert study should be made by the Center of Field Studies of the Harvard Graduate School of Education at a cost of \$6,000.

This expert study, begun in 1950 and entitled *Stages in Curriculum Design, 1951—1960*, later an official Harvard publication, became the foundation of much current practice and future planning.

So-called “lay” participation, as it was termed by professional educators, was of much help also, though the organizations through which it functioned were short-lived. An Elementary School Lay-Professional Council of fifty members was formed in 1951, disbanding a year later. In May 1952, a Junior High School Planning Council was organized with some twenty-five “lay” members nominated by the Parent-Teacher Council and an equal number chosen among junior high school teachers, supervisors, and principals, with a “lay” member, William C. Russell, as president.

The School Committee adopted many of the recommendations of this lay-professional Council, which, having accomplished its mission, disbanded in 1953. Its functions reverted to



the Parent-Teacher Council and to the individual Parent-Teacher Associations at the two junior high schools.

"Integration" was the goal of post-war junior high school education. This was a retreat from the extreme departmentalizing of subjects in the 1920s. Junior high school students in Pittsfield had been taught English composition, literature, spelling, and penmanship by four different teachers. History, geography, and civics were similarly taught in tight little courses with small regard for the larger relationships and patterns of knowledge and understanding.

The curriculum in the city's new junior high schools, virtually the one outlined by the lay-professional Planning Council, was designed for (1) complete integration of the "language arts"—i.e., English; (2) integration of history, geography, and civics in the social studies program, coordinated with social science studies in the lower schools; (3) correlation of the language arts and social studies in grade 7—a rudimentary "core" program; and (4) major science courses in grades 8 and 9.

In 1954—55, in an important innovation, authentic core classes were taught in the junior high schools—one at North and one at South—by Miss Ruth I. Mills, a Pittsfield teacher who had studied core programs all over the country under a Ford Foundation fellowship. The core curriculum had been strongly recommended in the Harvard Report.

Undoubtedly the most exciting event at the new junior high schools was the filming there of sequences for a documentary television production entitled "The Search." Made by the Columbia Broadcasting System, the film dramatized the interacting elements of curriculum and plant in really modern schools. Televised for a nation-wide audience in January 1955, Pittsfield saw the film over area Station WRGB and was proud to have its junior high schools exhibited as models for other communities to follow.

In the senior high school, attendance had remained almost stable since 1940—about 1,500 to 1,600 students a year, more than the building could efficiently accommodate. Of the girls, about half enrolled in the commercial department, a third in

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college preparatory, and the remainder in general courses, household arts, and the "retail sales curriculum."

After World War II, most of the boys chose one of three courses; (1) vocational, with alternating weeks of school and shop work, leading to a high school diploma and apprentice work in a trade; (2) college preparatory, designed not only for those planning to go to college but for those desiring a broad academic background; and (3) technical, planned for those intending to go on to higher studies in science and engineering, or to engage in technical occupations after graduation.

The technical high school program was organized in 1947 and placed under Dr. Louis W. Marks, who was granted leave of absence from General Electric to become the first teacher-administrator of the program, being succeeded in 1948 by Dr. Edward B. Van Dusen, vice principal in charge of technical education. So far as boys are concerned—girls are not regularly enrolled—"Tech" has rapidly risen in enrollment to a point equal to that of the college preparatory program.

Even so, stimulated by the return to school of so many war veterans under the "G. I. Bill of Rights," the high school has encouraged college preparation and sought to establish more scholarships for able students needing some financial help. In addition to the scholarships offered by business and civic groups, the Teachers Association established scholarships for future teachers, financed by the annual plays presented by the teachers.

While heavily weighted with academic and vocational studies, the high school program offered many opportunities for somewhat more creative expression, especially in writing and music. Operettas were presented each year by the graduating class. Choral groups and glee clubs were organized. The high school band was enlarged, as was the student orchestra. Groups from the high school participated in the impressive Western Massachusetts Music Festival held at Pittsfield in May 1954.

During the war and post-war years, the school magazine, *The Students' Pen*, under the supervision of Madeline E. Pfeiffer, head of the English Department, gained national recognition by winning sixteen successive merit awards in the Columbia Schol-



astic Press Association's annual contests. In 1951, the magazine was given the much-prized Medalist Award. *The Dome*, the senior yearbook, has also won many first awards.

Periodic testing of intelligence, aptitudes, and achievement had long been part of the school program. In 1944, to coordinate and develop this work, the School Committee authorized the creation of a public school testing department, which was placed in charge of Theodore Herberg, head of mathematics at the high school and a statistics specialist.

In 1951, the department was expanded to include research and curriculum. Its responsibilities include the administration of the testing program from kindergarten through high school; the statistical processing of results arising from the testing; the continuous accumulation and interpretation of data of all types relating to the educational program and school needs; the coordination of curriculum development; and the analysis of text book requirements.

An organized guidance program was built up by Robert J. McCarthy, who resigned in 1945, and by his successor, Charles E. Murphy, a teacher at the high school who had served as a Navy officer during the war, specializing in personnel work.

New features were added to the guidance program: cumulative folders, containing test profiles, interest inventories, anecdotal records, and other pupil-personnel data; pupil interviews with counselors; ninth-grade curriculum clinics in the several junior high schools; testing and advisement for veterans; consultative service, using people drawn from industrial, business, and professional fields; and a community occupational survey. The program won an award in a national guidance program contest, and earned inclusion in the text book *How to Organize Your Guidance Program*.

As 1954 closed, Director Murphy was arranging to code the school census to be taken in conjunction with the 1955 state decennial census as a preliminary to the IBM card-punching operation that would make the data available for a number of guidance studies, as well as in the School Department's school building surveys.

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The phenomenal educational achievements of the armed services training program identified "learning the G.I. way" with audio-visual education and gave impetus to the classroom use of films.

In 1947, the School Committee created a department of audio-visual education headed by Joseph R. McMahon, a teacher at the high school. Under the new department, much new equipment was bought and increasing use has been made of sound and film strips, record players, magnetic tape recorders, tachistoscopes and reading accelerators, portable radios, and other modern teaching aids. The Harvard Report declared that Pittsfield should be congratulated on the use it made of "audio-visual materials for the enrichment of the entire school program."

In 1947, also, another new department was created—health and safety education, headed by Alice V. Coffey, an M.A. in health education. A School Health Council was formed, with membership drawn from the Health Department as well as from teachers and principals.

Health education became integrated into the daily classroom activities of the elementary schools and the several subjects of the secondary schools, centering around the basic areas of personal health, nutrition, community health, sanitation, family living, first aid, mental health, safety, and home nursing.

In 1953, in response to newly revised state legislation, the health examinations of pupils were made more searching and parents were encouraged to be present. The School Department cooperated in the administration of the Salk polio vaccine to pupils in Grades 1, 2, and 3 in clinics set up in the public schools.

The schoolboy traffic patrol, sponsored by the Automobile Club of Berkshire County, was developed into an efficiently functioning organization with the aid of the Police Department and support from the B'nai B'rith, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Master Plumbers Association, and the local theatre managers.

Similar community cooperation came to the aid of the driver education program. A Pontiac dual-control car was donated by



a local automobile dealer. The American Legion sponsored driving skill contests. Trucking companies, automobile dealers, and the General Electric Company also cooperated in the program.

Among Pittsfield "firsts" in the health and safety program were the periodic measuring of height and weight of pupils by the classroom teacher (1947); system-wide accident survey (1948); police inspection and "scotch-liting" of bicycles at school playgrounds (1950); planned teacher-nurse conferences on pupils of the class (1950); 20-hour classroom driver education course required of high school pupils (1950); A-bomb school civilian defense (1951); class for deaf pupils (1953); student accident insurance coverage (1954). In 1952 and 1953 Pittsfield was cited by the National Safety Council for "outstanding achievement in school traffic safety education."

Pittsfield opened new avenues in civic education, too. Mounting post-war international tensions—the "cold war," so called—caused public schools to invigorate civic education programs designed to teach procedures characteristic of the American way of life.

"Good citizenship begins at home," Superintendent Russell had said, "and a rich source of learning experiences in good citizenship can be found in the family and child welfare, youth, health, and service organizations which are banded together in the Community Chest and Council."

In 1951, the School Committee authorized the Superintendent to explore the establishment of a United Students Fund embracing all the pupils in the public schools. One of the reasons leading to this decision was the belief, shared by many teachers and principals, that existing opportunities for pupils to participate in charitable endeavors were heavily weighted in favor of financial contributions rather than the educational aspects of such participation. It was felt that the educative phases of participation should be stressed and the financial phase should be a means and not an end in itself.

As a result, individual campaigns conducted in the schools for the Community Chest, the Red Cross, polio drive, and others, were eliminated in favor of two general contributions,

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one in October and the other in January, the proceeds from which went into the treasury of the United Students Fund.

The establishment of the United Students Fund inspired a year-round educational program in regard to charitable contributions. To promote this program, the Curriculum Department issued a booklet on "Learning About Community Chest Agencies." In 1953, citing this program, Freedom Foundation awarded the Pittsfield public schools the George Washington Honor Medal "for outstanding achievement in bringing about a better understanding of the American way of life."

The post-war years brought increased influence, prestige, professional standing, and pay to the teachers in the city schools. In the 1945 municipal election, as directed by the state legislature, Pittsfield and all Massachusetts communities voted on this question:

Shall women teachers employed in the same grades and doing the same type of work with the same preparation and training as men teachers be paid at the same rate as men teachers?

Admittedly, the phrasing of the question was vague. What was "the same type of work," or "the same preparation and training"? In any case, Pittsfield favored the proposal in principle, voting "yes" by more than 4 to 1.

As a consequence, taking this opportunity to revise an obsolete salary schedule, the School Committee decreed that, without regard to sex, teachers' salaries would henceforth be determined (1) by the grade level taught (elementary, junior high school, or senior high school), and (2) by the individual teacher's professional preparation (training beyond high school, college degrees, etc.) This was a transition to a single-salary system, which the School Committee adopted the next year.

Under the single-salary system, teachers were placed in pay categories based on length of professional training, regardless of the grade they taught. Extreme inequalities still prevailed in teachers' salaries and in 1948, the School Committee completed the "equalization" process by removing the last vestiges of position and sex differentials, placing each teacher in a salary category determined by education and experience. By 1955,



maximum salaries reached and passed the \$5,000 mark. Between 1945—46 and 1953—54, the average staff salary rose from \$2,190 to \$4,077 a year.

With the increased emphasis on and the new incentive for professional training came another important development. More and more of the city's public school teachers sought advanced training. This had been difficult for teachers in Pittsfield, who had had to make long trips to North Adams, Amherst, Springfield, Albany, and even more distant points for the "residence" courses required for a bachelor's or master's degree.

In 1945, with Superintendent Russell cooperating, the North Adams State Teachers College gained the permission of the State Education Department to make Pittsfield High School part of its campus, so to speak. Courses taken there were accepted as "residence" courses. A much longer step was soon taken. The North Adams Teachers College held its annual summer session at the city high school in 1946, and every summer since has done so, attracting students from a wide area.

The proportion of local elementary teachers with college degrees rose from 5 per cent in 1944—45 to more than 40 per cent in 1953—54. More of the junior and senior high school staffs held a B.A. or a higher college degree. Setting an example for his staff, Superintendent Russell earned a Ph.D. degree from the University of Ottawa, Canada, in 1951.

Local school boards, or school committees, usually take a terrific beating from all sides—by students, parents, teachers, and the general public. They are either "too conservative" or "too radical." They want to spend either "too much" or "too little" on the public schools. They are either "too visionary," asking the impossible, or "too practical," looking only at tax rates.

Pittsfield's recent school committees have borne their share of criticisms and complaints, but they have been "beat up" less than most. In 1950, the Public Education Association and Columbia University's Teachers College, in a joint survey on school boards making a major contribution to educational prog-

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ress, named the Pittsfield School Committee as "one of America's outstanding school boards."

In 1951, the question of releasing children from school an hour a week for religious instruction came to the fore in the city. All of the Catholic churches favored the proposal. The Protestant and Jewish congregations were unanimously opposed. Late in 1951, the School Committee voted 5 to 3 to table a proposal under which released-time of an hour every Wednesday afternoon would be granted to children whose parents signified their approval. The question was deferred because the constitutionality of released-time legislation by states and local communities had been challenged, and cases were before the United States Supreme Court, which handed down a favorable decision early in 1952.

In September 1953, after considerable controversy, the School Department arranged that pupils in grades 9 to 12, later 10 to 12, could be dismissed for religious instruction during the last period on Mondays if their parents so requested. All Catholic churches have established such released-time instruction. The first of the Protestant churches to do so was the South Congregational Church. It has been followed by St. Stephen's, the First Baptist Church, and the Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church.

In June 1955, after 34 years as principal of the high school, Roy M. Strout retired and had the honor, for the first time in his Pittsfield career, of presenting diplomas to members of the graduating class, an office traditionally performed by the mayor. Vice Principal Harold E. Hennessy was named to be acting high school principal for a year, being appointed to succeed Strout as principal early in 1956.

### *Parent-Teacher Association*

In Pittsfield, as from coast to coast, one of the strongest influences in the support of public education in all its aspects, curricular and extra-curricular, is the Parent-Teacher Association. In 1954, PTA had almost 9,000,000 paid-up members in the country, 114,500 in Massachusetts, and 3,250 in Pittsfield. PTA



units are active in all 21 of the city's public elementary and junior high schools.

The first local unit was formed in 1914 at Dawes School, with Mrs. E. G. Winston as president. Its first projects included buying stereographic views for use in the school, good pictures for the classrooms, chairs for the auditorium. Dues were 25 cents a year, with additional funds raised by "dime socials" and food sales. By 1924, the Dawes PTA had almost 400 members.

Meantime, a PTA had been established at Redfield School in 1921. Other units were organized at Pomeroy School in 1925 and at Crane Junior High School in 1926. These units, with that at Dawes School, organized in 1927 the Pittsfield Council of the Parent-Teacher Association, with Mrs. A. W. Pierce as president.

It appears that the PTA movement in Pittsfield then languished for ten years. In 1937 the next unit was formed, at Plunkett Junior High School. Beginning in 1941, PTAs were organized in all of the public schools below the senior high school. A unit formed at the Notre Dame parochial school joined the PTA Council, but soon withdrew, finding it difficult to follow the organization's fundamental policy of being non-sectarian.

After years of quietude, the PTA Council became active again in 1940—44, under the presidency of Mrs. James F. Shipton. These were war years, and the Council sponsored and encouraged the "Block Plan of War Services," organized home nursing classes under the guidance of the Red Cross, and aided in providing bandages and other supplies for the Visiting Nurse Association.

During the war years, too, the Council initiated the "Summer Roundup," in which it offered to consenting parents a free and complete health and dental examination for every child about to enter school. With the cooperation of the Public Health and the School Departments, this program was conducted until 1953, when schools were required by state law to give pupils a complete health examination every three years, rendering the PTA program unnecessary.

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In 1942, the Council sponsored the first of the present series of gay community Halloween parties that have since become an annual event, now sponsored by the Parks and Recreation Department.

In 1954, members of PTA at all elementary schools performed the complicated clerical work involved in the test trials of the Salk polio vaccine in Pittsfield, and early in 1955 likewise conducted the clerical work for the more general program of Salk polio vaccine injections.

PTA has set itself the primary goal of keeping the general public informed about the needs of children and youth. It has shown the way by initiating many projects, sponsoring them until they proved their value and the public assumed responsibility for them, leaving PTA free to consider new problems that constantly arise.

### *Parochial Schools*

The first parochial school in the city was St. Joseph's, founded in 1897, when the sisters of St. Joseph opened an academy for Catholic youth in their convent adjoining the church on North Street. Two years later, a school with ten classrooms and an assembly hall was built on North Pearl Street, on the site of the old Melville School, which was moved across the street to become the municipality's tool house.

Still serving as St. Joseph's Grammar School, the North Pearl Street building opened in 1899 with some 450 pupils from all Catholic parishes attending under the instruction of the Sisters of St. Joseph. As more than 550 children had been registered, the overflow had to be temporarily sheltered in the old Academy rooms on North Street.

By 1915, enrollment had increased to almost 700 pupils, divided among eight elementary grades. A four-year high school course was soon established. The growing enrollment forced the use of the large assembly hall as classrooms.

To relieve congestion, the parish under Father Bernard S. Conaty bought the Blain house on Maplewood Avenue in 1915 for use of the high school, which then numbered 110 students.



School facilities were expanded in 1924 by the purchase of the buildings of the Holy Family Church and of the adjoining Unity Church on Linden Street.

Succeeding Father Conaty as pastor of St. Joseph's in 1940, the Reverend Charles L. Foley undertook to bring the scattered units of the parochial school together by concentrating the lower grades in the North Pearl Street building and constructing a new Catholic central high school. Land was bought at the corner of Maplewood Avenue and North Pearl Street, and St. Joseph's Catholic Central High School was built, opening there in September 1942.

Designed by J. R. Hampson of Pittsfield, with Daniel O'Connell & Sons as general contractors, the attractive new high school incorporated the best in modern school planning and construction. On its three floors it has almost twenty large classrooms, well-equipped chemistry and physics laboratories with adjoining lecture rooms, a principal's office, a faculty rest room, a nurse's office and examination room, and a cafeteria seating almost 350 people. Well ventilated and well heated, the building is equipped with fluorescent lighting, being modern throughout in all of its facilities.

Coeducational, the high school offers five courses of study: college preparatory, nurses' preparatory, commercial, technical, and general. Enrollment grew from 250 in 1920 to 400 in 1940 and to almost 520 in 1954. "St. Joe's," as it is locally known, and PHS (Pittsfield High School) have always been keen rivals in sports and other activities.

Enrollment in St. Joseph's Grammar School averaged about 350 in 1920, rising to a peak of more than 450 in 1942. It has since declined to approximately the 1920 level, due largely to the opening of more parochial schools.

The second parochial school to be established was St. Charles'. Having grown considerably down the years, it celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of its founding in 1954, at which time it had more than 380 pupils in its eight grades under the tutelage of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

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The school was conceived by the "Father of St. Charles' Parish," the Reverend William J. Dower, who in 1910, having cleared the parish of debt, began collecting funds to build a parochial school. Collections for some years were slow. But Father Dower, as opportunity offered and means afforded, bought twelve lots and two houses on Pontoosuc and Lenox avenues. One of the houses still serves the Sisters of St. Joseph as a convent.

A concerted drive in the early 1920s brought in subscriptions for \$38,500, and in 1923 ground was broken for St. Charles' School. A year later, by the opening of school in 1924, several hundred pupils entered the attractive and rather large building on Lenox Avenue, which has since served St. Charles'. The building contains nine classrooms, as well as an auditorium and dining room.

Late in August 1955, fire caused considerable damage to the school. If some of the pupils hoped for a fortuitous extension of their summer vacation, they were disappointed, for repairs were made so rapidly that school opened on schedule.

Notre Dame parish, under the Reverend Leo E. Laviolette, built and in 1937 dedicated a new building for its parochial school. It had been established in part from a desire to afford the Franco-American children of the parish an opportunity to master the tongue of their ancestors. Much of the instruction—even in arithmetic!—was in French.

Erected on Melville Street, the new Ecole Notre Dame had eleven large classrooms on the first and second floors, with a cafeteria, workshop, and rest rooms in the basement. Les Filles du Saint Esprit, or Daughters of the Holy Ghost, an order of teaching Sisters founded in France, came from their Provincial House in Connecticut to offer instruction. An adjoining building on Melville Street was remodeled to serve them as a convent.

Enrollment in the school approximated 350 at its opening in 1937. Attendance reached a peak of 420 in 1950 and has since declined to the original enrollment, largely because the kindergarten had to be closed in 1953 for want of sufficient teaching nuns.



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Though the original St. Mary's Church on Plunkett Street, dedicated in 1919, was intended to serve both as a church and a school, St. Mary's Parochial School did not open its doors until the fall of 1941, when rooms on the upper floor of the building were used for teaching the first four grades, with the Sisters of St. Joseph as instructors. The construction of a new St. Mary's Church allowed the lower floor of the old building to be transformed into classrooms. By 1944, eight grades were being taught.

The children in the school are of many national origins—Irish, Yankee, French, Italian, Polish, Arabic, Portuguese, Spanish, and even Japanese. Enrollment has grown from less than a hundred in 1941 to more than 300 in 1955.

The latest of the parochial schools is Mount Carmel's. Early in 1954, the parish bought for \$30,000 one of the older public schools, the Read, at the corner of Fenn and Second streets, adjoining the church property. Constructed in 1885, the Read school building originally had twelve classrooms. The number of classrooms was reduced to eight in the 1940s when the third floor of the structure was removed.

At a cost of \$137,000, Mount Carmel proceeded to renovate the building completely. Among other improvements, it installed a school hall, a cafeteria, and a blacktop playground for use as an outdoor gymnasium, the work being done by the Stonecraft Construction Company, headed by Joseph Francese, a parishioner.

In September 1954, the school opened, having sixty pupils in pre-primary and first grade classes with the Venerini Sisters as teachers. Plans call for the addition of a class a year until there are eight grades in the primary division.

### *Private and Other Schools*

#### *Miss Hall's School*

Miss Hall's School, well and widely known as a girls' school, attracting students from all over the country, has a distinguished history, dating back almost to 1800 when Nancy Hinsdale (the sister of William Hinsdale, of the hill town of Hins-

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dale, a few miles east of Pittsfield) founded Pittsfield's first institution for the higher education of young women.

In 1806, the institution became the first incorporated boarding school for girls in Massachusetts. At the time it had forty-one pupils. By 1813, when Miss Hinsdale left the school, enrollment had increased to a hundred or more.

The school was acquired by Miss Mary Salisbury in 1871 and by Miss Mira Hinsdale Hall in 1898. Having been conducted for some years in a building at the corner of South and Reed streets, the school was moved to the Elmwood Court mansion on Bartlett Avenue in 1902, remaining there till 1908, when Miss Hall bought the beautiful Cutting estate of seventy-five acres on Holmes Road. Fire destroyed the wooden buildings in 1923. These were replaced by the present school building, a handsome Georgian structure completed in 1924. While it was being constructed, classes were held in the Curtis Hotel at Lenox.

In 1924, the school was incorporated as a non-profit-making educational institution owned and directed by a self-perpetuating board of trustees. This enabled the school to accept the gifts which Miss Hall had scrupulously refused so long as the institution was her personal property.

Upon Miss Margaret Hall's retirement in 1948, the board of trustees appointed the present headmistress, Miss Elizabeth M. Fitch, a graduate of Barnard and Radcliffe, and an educator of wide experience who came to Pittsfield from Hartford, where she had been headmistress of the Oxford School.

Under Miss Fitch, the curriculum of Miss Hall's school has been further modernized, with workshops in practical arts and crafts for students in both the college preparatory and general courses. Most graduates go to college.

From an enrollment of 84 in 1945, the school now has 110 resident students and eighteen day students. Enrollment is kept small enough to insure individual attention on the part of the faculty and individual responsibility on the part of each girl. Extracurricular activities include workshops in many creative



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fields, choirs and glee clubs, and organizations for sports and community service.

### *Miss Mills' School*

There was another widely-known girls' school in Pittsfield down to 1930—Miss Mills' School for Girls. A Berkshire native and a graduate of Smith College, Miss Ruth A. Mills founded her small private school in 1904, first occupying quarters on Appleton Avenue, later moving to Wendell Avenue, to the large house that is now the home of the Women's Club. In 1930, Miss Mills left Pittsfield to conduct the Taconic School in Great Barrington, later teaching for many years in Philadelphia. Dying in 1951, Miss Mills was buried in Pittsfield.

### *Pittsfield Community Music School*

Incorporated in 1940 with Mrs. Bruce Crane of Dalton as president, the Pittsfield Community Music School, one of the city's more distinctive institutions, opened early in 1941 at the famed Peace Party House on East Street, which had been completely restored in the early 1930s. The first director was Miss Mary Elizabeth Jones of New York and Seattle, a professional violinist and teacher of music.

The school's purpose has always been to make available to all an opportunity to acquire a thorough training in music, not merely as an appreciator, but as a player of an instrument. To this end, it offers scholarships and student aid depending upon the financial status of the student and his family, and sufficient ability and interest on the part of the student to derive enjoyment from his study. The school is supported in large part by contributions from those interested in its programs.

In 1943, the Community Music School bought the large Allen H. Bagg house on Wendell Avenue, its present quarters, and remodeled it and the barn into studios and classrooms for the 150 children enrolled.

Having been on leave of absence with USO concert tours for servicemen during the war, Miss Jones resigned as director in

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1945 and was succeeded by her former teacher, Miss Nellie C. Cornish, founder of the Cornish Music School in Seattle.

Upon her retirement in 1948, the school was placed in charge of its present directors, Jan Stocklinski and his wife Marjorie. Enrollment has grown steadily until, in 1955, the number exceeded 450 students in the music and dance departments.

The school has a capable faculty providing instruction in piano, strings, woodwinds, brass, voice, pipes, orchestra, piano ensemble, harmony and composition, eurythmics, ballet, and modern dance. It gives 25,000 lessons a year to all ages, from pre-school children to adults.

The school sponsors Pittsfield's Little Symphony Orchestra, now a member of the National Association of Orchestras. Through its Concert Bureau, students have given many free concerts throughout the Berkshires. To help raise money for the scholarship fund, the school presents local concerts by outstanding musicians from time to time, and concerts by faculty members. Many of its students have chosen music as a professional career. It has brought to thousands of others the joy and inspiration of sharing in the heritage of great music.

The Pittsfield Community Music School is one of only seventeen such schools in the country, being a member of the National Guild of Community Music Schools, organized in 1937 to coordinate the work of such schools and promote the highest levels of music education. The local school functions on a very small budget which, in 1954, barely exceeded \$40,000.

### *Other Educational Facilities*

As remarked before, Pittsfield became a part-time center of higher education in 1946 when the North Adams Teachers College began holding its summer sessions at the Pittsfield High School. Another forward step was taken in 1953 when evening courses in electrical engineering leading to a college degree were offered in the high school under the joint sponsorship of the University of Massachusetts, the University Extension Service of the state, and the local School Department. Courses include not only the fundamentals of electrical engineering,



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mathematics, and mechanical drawing, but the elements of economics and modern European civilization.

One of the few of its kind in the country, the program allows students to proceed at minimum cost to a college degree while employed on a regular job.

## XIV

### *Health and Welfare*

IN EARLY NEW ENGLAND, as elsewhere in the country at the time, health and welfare created individual or family concern for which the community as a whole shouldered little or no responsibility. If one were sick or in need and had no other resources, one turned to one's immediate neighbors for help, or to the parish, or to the poorhouse of the town. The concept of social welfare has greatly expanded since that day of really "rugged" individualism. There is now a much broader faith that each of us is his brother's keeper—or to put it in harder and more selfish terms, that the well-being of the community rests upon the health and well-being of every individual among us.

#### *Union for Home Work*

In Pittsfield, what would now be described as social work began in the 1870s when a severe national depression—then called a "financial panic"—caused most local factories to close down, creating serious unemployment and widespread distress. In 1878, a Union for Home Work was formed for the "relief of the poor, the reform of the bad, the prevention and decrease of pauperism and begging at the door."

Organized primarily to centralize charitable work in the community, the Union was one of the first organizations of its kind in the country, being a sort of primitive Community Chest. Supported by donations, with volunteers doing most of its work, the Union expanded its program as time went on. It conducted a sewing school, a cooking school, a boys' club, a day nursery,



and other activities down to 1911, when it ceased to be active as more specialized agencies took over much of its work.

Today, there are scores of organizations in the city active in the field of community health and welfare. All of them, whether public or private, now comprise the recently-created United Community Services of Pittsfield, Inc. This new body was formed early in 1955 by the merger of the Community Chest and the Community Council. These two organizations had been courting each other for some time before their union was finally effected.

### *Community Chest*

The older of the merging organizations was the Community Chest. It was established in 1924 under the name of the Community Fund Association, with Charles W. Power as the first president. It grew out of the city's experience during World War I when the Pittsfield War Chest demonstrated the efficiency, economy, and convenience of concentrating money-raising efforts in one joint campaign.

Thirteen local social agencies became charter members of the Community Fund, and six more had joined by 1938. In 1947, the organization changed its name to the Pittsfield Community Chest.

In its early years, under the presidencies of Charles W. Power (1924—25), General Charles B. Wheeler (1925—28), and Allen H. Bagg (1928—29), the Chest concentrated on its biggest task—that of organizing and directing the annual fund-raising campaign that was then, as now, its principal function. But the Chest was also, as its officers and the press pointed out, “a valuable laboratory for the development of community co-operation.”

The need for efficient year-round administration becoming more apparent, an office with a permanent clerk was opened in the Berkshire County Savings Bank building in 1927. By the end of 1929, after struggling for five years with organizational, budgetary, and community relations problems, the Chest was: “in a well-organized and healthy condition.”

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Then came the Depression with its special and very urgent problems. Under the presidency of Henry A. Francis, who served all during the Depression, down to his death late in 1939, the Chest and its member agencies found themselves swamped with calls for help. A new and larger office was opened in the Onota Building in 1931. One of the founders of the Chest, Irvin P. Thompson, a GE executive, was persuaded to become executive secretary, serving in that post from 1932 until his retirement in 1948.

As Depression difficulties multiplied, the Chest set up an Advisory Unemployment Committee, which was very active from 1930 to 1935. With its support, the administration of general relief was gradually shifted to the Public Welfare Department. Seeing the need for case work in public welfare service, the Chest financed the first such work in the city. It financed in part the Clothes Cupboard organized by the Junior League in 1933. Its health and recreation agencies did their utmost to relieve "the hunger that asked for more than food."

As it became clear that the whole community welfare pattern had to be reviewed for intelligent future planning, experts were brought in to make recommendations. An immediate result was the establishment of the Social Service Index for the better correlation of all community work by both private and public agencies. Another was the formation in 1933 of a broad planning organization, the Council of Social Agencies, which became the Community Council.

Further evaluation of local social services was undertaken in the Swander Survey of 1938, which made recommendations for increased efficiency and closer relations between Chest members and the general public.

The annual fund-raising goal of the Chest rose from \$100,000 in 1924 to \$163,400 in 1932, and receded slightly to \$145,000 in 1940.

World War II led the Red Cross, a charter member, to withdraw from the Chest. It felt obliged to conduct its own separate financial drives in view of the tremendously increased demands



upon it. All Chest agencies reshaped their programs to meet the war emergency.

The fund-raising goals of 1942 and 1943 were exceeded by almost \$18,000, a sum placed in a much needed reserve fund. After the war, the 1945 and 1946 campaigns failed to reach their goals, forcing the use of reserve funds to make up the shortage.

In 1943, upon his retirement after three years as president of the Chest, Simon England urged that small givers should have more representation in the direction of the organization's affairs. Members of trade unions and other groups were increasingly contributing to community welfare. To spread broader knowledge of the Chest's health, welfare, and recreation services, a new year-round public relations program was instituted under the direction of Mrs. Gladys A. Brigham, who in 1948 became executive secretary, succeeding Irvin P. Thompson.

In 1948, to eliminate the many solicitations made in the Morningside plant for various purposes, the General Electric Employees' Charity Fund was established. This pattern was followed by other industrial concerns in the city. This single-fund arrangement has pleased management and employees alike. Many workers regularly contribute through a payroll-deduction plan.

As the multiplicity of fund-raising campaigns continued to be a problem, a united fund plan was adopted. The name of the directing agency was changed to the Pittsfield United Community Chest. Changes were made in its constitution and by-laws to permit the admission of such national organizations as the associations to combat cancer, cerebral palsy, arthritis and rheumatism. The United Defense Fund, the Camp Fire Girls and similar groups were also included.

At the same time, the city's public schools set up their own united fund, to which students make contributions twice a year for charitable purposes. The schools, with each represented, have their own board of directors who make allocations of the fund for specific purposes.

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In 1952, the Red Cross rejoined the Chest, and a study of salaries in the Red Feather agencies was completed. The next year, the Chest and some of its member agencies realized a long-time dream when General Electric gave \$30,000 for the purchase of one of the Stanley Club buildings on Wendell Avenue. Repaired and remodeled, the building was occupied as Red Feather headquarters early in 1955, bringing more agencies under one roof and considerably reducing overhead expenses.

Meantime, a long-range study of community services, both public and private, had been undertaken. As one result, and the most important, the Community Chest and the Community Council decided to merge, a development discussed below.

The last presidents of the Community Chest as such were Franz X. Brugger (1943—44, and 1948—50), Frederick A. Pease (1944—48), Gardner F. Knight (1950—51), Harrison L. Amber (1951—53) and Benjamin M. England (1953—55).

### *Community Council, United Community Services*

The Community Council was founded in 1933 as the Council of Social Agencies, with Rabbi Harry Kaplan as its first chairman. Its members consisted of thirty-five local welfare agencies, public and private. Its purpose was cooperative planning, promotion of social legislation, and arousing public opinion to support more systematic care of those reduced to need by the Depression.

The Council sought to establish better medical and dental facilities for those in distress. It sponsored health education programs and engaged professional nutritionists to help families struggling along on very limited budgets. It emphasized the continuing and expanding need for playgrounds and other recreational facilities.

In 1937, it took the initiative in bringing the problem of venereal disease—"social disease"—into open discussion at a large public meeting held in the Pittsfield High School. The meeting was jointly sponsored by the Council, the Public Health Department, the Chamber of Commerce, and the District Medical Society. Public programs on Social Hygiene Day were held



in 1938 and again in 1940. An active committee was organized to advance educational and clinical work in the field.

From the start, the Council interested itself in studies of and action on housing, medical care, nursing care, and recreation. It worked steadily to better the public playground system. During World War II, it initiated many special projects. One of these was the establishment of day care centers for children of working mothers. Open six days a week from 6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., these centers were financed in part by a Federal grant. The School Department furnished supervision.

The Council sponsored a week-long Health Festival at the Museum and aroused public interest in the Spring Health Roundup for pre-school children. It aided the movement to establish a local cancer clinic.

After the war, a long strike at the GE plant posed new problems. With many families needing aid, the Council established an information and counselling center to direct those in difficulties to the proper community agencies, all of which did their utmost to relieve distress.

With the divorce rate in Pittsfield rapidly rising—in 1946, the local divorce rate was 80 per cent above the previous year—the Council sponsored a well-attended series of lectures on “Family Living.” It kept urging the need of a local clinic for alcoholism, which was finally established in 1951.

By 1950, now having 52 member organizations, the Council decided to reorganize for greater efficiency in meeting constantly changing community needs. Down the years, the chairmen of the Council had been Rabbi Harry Kaplan (1933-35), Carl E. Cozzio (1936-38), Mrs. Ruth E. Pease (1939-40), Cleon H. Brownell (1941), Francis H. Henshaw (1942-44), and Frank A. Woodhead (1944-50).

Under the new constitution adopted in May 1950, the organization changed its name to the Pittsfield Community Council, with Mrs. Jay C. Rosenfeld as its first president. She was succeeded in 1953 by Arthur G. Sanford, who was followed the next year by Frederick M. Myers, Jr.

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The new organization, which soon had 71 members, undertook an expanded program. The Council sponsored the city's first Conference for Senior Citizens, and one for teenagers also. Out of the meeting of the latter came the "after-prom" parties now in fashion among the youth.

The Council had a strong hand in getting two important ordinances passed by the city—one for better minimum housing standards; the other for minimum standards for day care. It went on record against a state lottery and against building race tracks in Lanesborough and Hancock. A satisfactory plan for legal aid was worked out with the Bar Association.

An interagency referral system for follow-up of nursing care was instituted. The Medical Society was urged to formulate a plan to meet the need for emergency medical care. Services to handicapped children were coordinated.

It had become evident to the leaders of the Community Council and the Community Chest that a thorough, long-range study of community services, both public and private, was needed. To consider the problem, the two organizations appointed a joint committee of four, with Joseph Gross as chairman.

On the recommendation of this committee, professional experts of the Community Chests and Councils of America were engaged to make an exhaustive survey and recommendations on their findings. The cost of the survey was largely met by \$5,000 from the Community Chest reserves and by an equal sum contributed by the General Electric Charity Fund.

Begun early in 1954 and completed later that year, the survey resulted in a long and valuable report entitled *The Pittsfield Community Survey of Health, Welfare, and Recreation Services*. It minutely and thoughtfully covered every aspect of the field.

Among its major recommendations was a proposal that the Community Chest and the Community Council be merged to provide a better balance between community planning, budgeting, and fund-raising activities.

After some discussion, and with little opposition, the two organizations adopted the proposal and early in 1955 joined to



become the United Community Services of Pittsfield, with Hamilton M. Redman as president.

### *Association for Family Service*

One of the oldest of the community services, the Association for Family Service, grew out of an older organization, the Associated Charities, which in 1937 celebrated its fiftieth birthday at a civic dinner, with Judge Charles L. Hibbard as master of ceremonies. Organized in 1887, the Associated Charities had offices in the Berkshire Life building, soon moving to the Union for Home Work at 96 Fenn Street. There it remained until 1917 when it established itself at 119 Fenn Street. In 1932, the agency bought the old telephone building, making that its headquarters until 1955 when it occupied offices in the Red Feather house at 54 Wendell Avenue.

Through the years, reflecting the great economic and social changes that have occurred not only in the community but throughout the nation, the work of the agency shifted in character and emphasis.

Down to World War I, the Associated Charities was largely concerned in giving financial assistance to needy families. Money was not given simply as a "dole." Each home situation was studied to see what could be done to help the family become eventually self-supporting.

During World War I, the agency was faced with problems arising out of war-time conditions. It assisted in the development of the Red Cross Home Service program. During the 1918 influenza epidemic, the Associated Charities met heavy demands for emergency assistance of many kinds.

For many years the work of the organization had been financed by drives and solicitation conducted by the agency itself. In 1924, this work was taken over by the Pittsfield Community Fund. Another function of the Associated Charities, the coordination of community interest in helping needy families, developed into the programs of such separate organizations as the Council of Social Agencies and the Social Service Index.

During the depression years in the early 1930s, the Associated Charities experienced a tremendous increase in applications for financial help. An Unemployment Advisory Committee was developed to meet the needs of the unemployed. When the Federal work relief programs were inaugurated, the organization's burden of providing relief was considerably reduced. After the passage of the Social Security Act of 1935, the relief function of the Associated Charities was gradually taken over by public authorities.

As a consequence, the organization devoted itself to increasing its skill in helping families and children with problems of adjustment at home, at school, and at work. The increasing availability of psychiatric knowledge greatly helped the agency's services to families and increased its effectiveness in preventing personality breakdown and disintegration of family life.

This change of emphasis in its work led to a change in the agency's name. In 1941, the Associated Charities became the Association for Family Service, with a staff of three professionally trained case workers. World War II and the post-war years brought new problems from families in need of help by Family Service.

Today, the agency offers a counseling service for people who are anxious about such matters as marital troubles, child development and behavior, household management, spending the family income, costs of illness, or anything affecting the stability of the home. In particularly difficult situations, staff members have the benefit of consultation with a psychiatrist at Riggs Center.

The year 1954 found Family Service at another turning point in its long history. A community survey of social services recommended that Family Service dissolve its organization, that it unite with other organizations to form a new Social Service Center, which could deal with family and children's problems on a broader and more integrated basis.

In May 1955, representatives of Family Service, the New England Home for Little Wanderers, and the Day Care Center decided to merge as recommended.



*New England Home for Little Wanderers*

The Berkshire Branch of the New England Home for Little Wanderers was established in Pittsfield in 1912, with Thomas F. Plunkett as first president of its board. Its parent association had been founded by a group of Methodist women in 1865 and had headquarters in Boston. Its chief aims included the maintenance of one or more homes for the temporary care of homeless or destitute children, and the placement of such children in foster homes for adoption, or for permanent care under supervision.

The Berkshire Branch had its first office in the Berkshire Life building, sharing the office and two staff members with the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. A temporary children's home was jointly subsidized by the two organizations until 1917 when it was discontinued as unnecessary.

World War I years brought the local Home a number of "war babies." There was an increase in juvenile delinquency. Complaints multiplied that "many young girls were beginning to be restive, wanting to stay out nights, go to movies and dances, and to walk the streets." Parents, friends, the police, and other agencies appealed to the Home for advice. The problems of a few juveniles were solved by placing them in responsible homes. In other cases, "Big Brothers" were successful in straightening out some of the boys.

The local offices of the New England Home and the SPCC were separated in 1921 because of the increased work of each, and to remove any confusion about their individual programs. The next year, the Home office was moved to 86 North Street, and in 1924 to 8 Bank Row. In that year, the agency was one of the founding members of the Pittsfield Community Fund Association. Though it joined the joint fund-raising campaign in the city, it continued to solicit funds on its own behalf in other parts of the county.

The establishment of the Child Guidance Clinic by the Riggs Foundation relieved the agency of many problems. Fewer chil-

dren had to be sent to the Study Home in Boston. At the same time, many local doctors and dentists contributed valuable assistance to New England Home's medical program. During the Twenties, the average number of children cared for each month increased to 74, and the boarding rate to \$5 a week.

The Thirties brought new problems. The number of children receiving care rose to a record high of 116 in April 1935. The boarding rate paid to foster mothers had to be reduced because of financial stringency, with the result that foster homes were more difficult to find. Some children, pending permanent placement, had to be cared for in the Williams Street Home in Springfield. Children's clothing was donated by the Clothes Cupboard and the Needlework Guild.

In 1936, the city's Public Welfare Department undertook to place children supported by it. But it soon turned the problem of placing back to New England Home. The agency also undertook to provide convalescent care for children referred to it by the Crippled Children's Clinic, and to provide vacations and holidays for children in the Berkshire County School for Crippled Children.

World War II brought increased demands upon the local office. With many mothers working in industry, the number of applications for care of children rose steeply, being almost 60 per cent higher in 1943 than in 1942. Simultaneously, there was a decrease in the number of available foster homes, with the result that many children could not be placed.

This temporary problem was solved through the generosity of the Agricultural Bank, which offered the agency the use of Stonewall Lodge in Lenox. Opened as "Children's House" in March 1944, it closed in November 1945. During that period, it sheltered almost 120 children, 85 of them from Pittsfield.

After the war and down to 1954, the housing shortage continued to make the placing of children difficult. A drive was initiated to find more foster boarding homes in the county. From eighty to a hundred such homes are used each year. The agency pays from \$8 to \$10 a week for the care of each child. Group placements of children are arranged where such are



needed. The public welfare departments in the county use the agency to place children in their charge and bear part of the cost of such service.

A small but important part of the Home's program is the placing of children for adoption. Developmental tests and thorough physical examinations are given to all children before adoption. Supervision continues until the adoption is legally completed.

The agency's offices were moved from Bank Row to North Street in 1947, and early in 1955 to the Red Feather House on Wendell Avenue. The agent-in-charge at the time the organization decided to merge with others to form the Social Service Center was Miss Esther M. Jaquith.

### *Day Care Center*

The third organization in the Social Service Center merger was the Pittsfield Day Care Center. Founded in 1905 by Miss Florence Cowles, Miss Louise Weston and Mrs. William H. Eaton, the organization early the next year opened a double house on Columbus Avenue to provide day care for children of working mothers. Incorporated as the Pittsfield Day Nursery Association in 1908, having at the time about a hundred active and honorary members, the agency moved its nursery in 1911 to Fenn Street where a house had been offered rent free by the Union for Home Work.

During the early years, the Day Nursery had a difficult struggle for recognition and even survival. Having no endowment, it had to depend on subscriptions, donations, and funds raised by tag days, rummage sales, bridge parties, musicales, and similar activities. The members of the association had adopted the motto, "We must and shall succeed"—and succeed they did, often against discouraging odds. By 1915, the nursery was a member of the local Associated Charities and of the Federation of Nurseries.

In 1918—1919, the association bought and moved to a house on Francis Avenue, which still serves as its headquarters. The development entailed heavy expenditures to repair and remodel

the building, to make payments on mortgages and other debts. The women of the nursery agency had the help of the men of the city in organizing a campaign to raise funds. By 1922, all of the mortgages had been paid off, the nursery occupied a "sanitary and habitable building" and could meet current expenses.

But the history of the day center really lies in the work it has been doing for children for a half century now. Always, the best available matrons have been engaged to conduct the nursery, which is well furnished with children's furniture, toys, and other playthings for tots. For youngsters somewhat older, there are sewing classes for the girls, garden projects for the boys, and on occasion there are games, picnics, and visits to the Crane Museum and other suitable places. Every Christmas, there is a party for the children, with a tree and gifts for all, donated by the people not only of the city but of Lenox, Stockbridge, Dalton, and other neighboring towns. The day center has well served working mothers, and won their appreciation and gratitude.

### *School for Crippled Children*

Another institution serving the young is the Berkshire County School for Crippled Children, established in 1918 in its present quarters on West Street through the generosity of Mrs. Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge.

The School had its origin in 1916 when some fifty county residents organized the Berkshire County Society for the Care of Crippled and Deformed Children, choosing Dr. Henry Colt of Pittsfield as president. A summer camp for crippled children was held in 1917, sponsored by Mrs. W. Murray Crane of Dalton.

Impressed with the results, Mrs. Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge gave \$50,000 to endow the camp permanently in memory of her husband, Dr. Frederick S. Coolidge, who had started orthopaedic work in 1906 at the House of Mercy in Pittsfield. Shortly after her first gift, Mrs. Coolidge gave the Society her Upway



Field estate on West Street. On its forty acres stood a large, well-designed house and an historic cottage.

Here the School was formally opened in August 1918, with fifteen boys enrolled for care and training under the direction of the first superintendent, Marion P. Hills. Dr. W. Russell MacAusland, of Boston, was the medical director.

Mrs. Coolidge soon added to her benefactions by giving \$150,000 toward a larger endowment of the School. Upon his death in 1920, Senator W. Murray Crane of Dalton left a sizeable trust fund for the support of the institution.

The purpose of the School has always been to provide a friendly atmosphere for handicapped children until, through medical treatment, nursing care, and the companionship of other crippled youngsters, they are ready to return to their homes and families.

The School is open to any crippled or deformed child meeting required mental standards and who is judged capable of being helped. Enrollments are made regardless of color, creed, or the ability of parents to pay for care, though families able to contribute are charged up to a maximum of \$5 a day—the charge made for city and state welfare cases.

The School offers treatment for infantile paralysis, tubercular joints, and other diseases such as osteomyelitis, cerebral palsy, and rheumatic fever. Where possible, treatment is designed to restore full use of the affected muscles. Often, unfortunately, all that can be done is the strengthening and partial restoration of such muscles, and the provision of corrective mechanical devices to offset the disability.

Included in the medical staff are physical and occupational therapists. Planned exercise and recreation with the aid of corrective devices form a regular part of the program. For advanced treatment and surgery, the School works closely with the Shriners' Hospital for Crippled Children in Springfield.

Facilities of the School consist of the Main House with general living quarters, the Superintendent's Cottage, and a building housing the physio-and-occupational therapy departments, the workshop, the school room, a library-recreation room, and

a greenhouse. Every child is encouraged to tend an individual garden both for pleasure and for beneficial exercise.

The children are given the usual elementary school education under a qualified teacher. Graduates of the course wishing to pursue their education are taken daily to the Pittsfield High School.

The School had only boys until 1947, when girls were admitted. In 1953, it offered the use of its facilities to the United Cerebral Palsy Association—a cooperation that has been of decided advantage to both organizations. The Lions Club of Pittsfield has won the gratitude of the School and its patients by its generosity in providing much of the equipment in all departments.

Since its founding in 1918, the School has helped more than 300 children in need of kindly and expert care. Miss Catherine S. Dover was superintendent from 1944 to late 1955, when she resigned, being succeeded by Miss Florence H. McConahey, occupational therapist at the institution since 1952.

### *Berkshire County Home for Aged Women*

The Berkshire County Home for Aged Women occupies the brick and granite building on South Street erected in 1888 by the sons of Zenas Marshall Crane, of Dalton, to honor the memory of their father and in compliance with his last wishes. In 1925, through a legacy of Miss Annie B. Clapp, the third story of the structure was squared, and an infirmary, baths, and nurses' quarters were added.

The Home is interdenominational and open to all races. Through wars and shortages, it has been maintained at its full capacity of 28 residents. Members have been admitted from 23 of the county's communities.

The presidents of the Home since 1916 have been Mrs. Zenas Crane, Mrs. Samuel G. Colt, Mrs. Winthrop M. Crane, Mrs. Philip Weston, and Mrs. Benjamin M. Harris. After twenty years of service, Mrs. Nancy Tuxbury resigned as matron of the Home in 1940 and was succeeded by the present matron, Miss Lina R. Baldwin, an experienced trained nurse.



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The Home is attractively furnished and immaculately kept. An atmosphere of kindness and amiability prevails. Through the years, the Garden Clubs of Richmond and Northern Berkshire have contributed to beautifying the grounds with garden paths and borders, a summer house, bird bath, and benches placed in the shrubbery.

In 1937, Mrs. Catherine Pingree Dawes, a former neighbor, left a legacy to provide residents with automobile drives so that they might enjoy the air and neighboring points of interest. In 1930, Miss Kate Carey of Lenox gave a charming old house, Meadow Place, on Main Street in Lenox, to become a unit of the Berkshire County Home for Aged Women. Meadow Place accommodates 18 residents.

Annual Donation Day at the Home is a gala occasion. The house is decorated with autumn leaves and flowers, and the public invited to visit and enjoy refreshments. The ladies are "at home" to their friends, and there are always generous donations of all sorts of household goods. Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, and birthdays are also festive occasions.

During World War II, the women in the Home, aiding the cause of the United Nations, did a great deal of sewing, made surgical dressings, and patiently did "miles and miles" of knitting for the Red Cross, British War Relief, and similar causes.

The youthful spirit at the Home is often rather breath-taking. For years there was a gate three feet high at the top of the third-floor stairs to keep people from falling down, as had happened. One day, a third-floor resident, aged more than ninety, had her minister as a visitor and was showing him the way out.

"Oh, I see," he said, "you just go through this gate."

"You may go through if you wish," she said, "but I always step over it."

### *Visiting Nurse Association*

The Pittsfield Visiting Nurse Association grew out of work begun in 1901 by Miss Anna G. Clement, superintendent of the House of Mercy Hospital. She organized a group of graduate nurses of the hospital's Henry W. Bishop Memorial School of

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Nursing, each of whom pledged two weeks of service a year for work among the poor. In 1908, inspired by DeWitt Bruce, the Visiting Nurse Association was formed and engaged Miss Annie Osborne as nurse. A second nurse was added in 1916.

Incorporated in 1917, the Visiting Nurse Association adopted by-laws suggested by the National Organization for Public Health Nursing. The purposes of the Association are to promote health—individual, family, and community; to prevent disease by teaching the principles of health, hygiene, and sanitation; to provide skilled care for the sick in their homes on a part-time basis.

The staff of the local organization gradually grew until it consisted in 1941 of an executive director, a supervisor, seven nurses, and an office staff of two. Since then, two nurses have been added—one part-time—for work in industry.

Keeping pace with the times, adjusting itself to changing needs and conditions, the VNA has modified its policies and programs. In 1916, it began providing nurse service for the public schools in the city. This function was assumed by the School Department in 1919. Industrial nursing was inaugurated in 1918 and has since continued, with a full-time industrial nurse appointed in 1953.

The Association acquired its first automobile in 1920. Agency cars were used until 1941 when the policy of using nurse-owned cars was initiated. The Red Cross used VNA nursing service in 1921 to demonstrate the value of school nursing to neighboring towns, a service gradually taken over by the communities themselves. The Association's rapidly expanding work in child welfare was assumed by the city government in 1921. The VNA was one of the charter members of the Community Chest upon its founding in 1924.

By 1925, greater emphasis was being placed upon pre-natal care and classes for expectant mothers. These classes—with classes for "expectant" fathers, too—remain a vital part of the program. Service in delivering babies was discontinued in 1945.

VNA added nursing in cases of communicable disease in 1932 at the request of several doctors. Since 1941, radio broad-



casts by staff members have brought the care of certain diseases and the work of public health nurses to the community's attention. The agency's services were extended to the residents of Lanesborough in 1950. VNA established with the Pittsfield General Hospital in 1953 a coordinated program designed to improve continuity of service for patients leaving the hospital, and to educate student nurses in better ways of meeting the general health needs of the community.

### *Red Cross*

The Berkshire County Chapter of the American Red Cross was founded in Pittsfield in 1905, with Judge John C. Crosby as chairman. He was succeeded in 1914 by Arthur N. Cooley. Other Pittsfield men who have served as chairmen of the county chapter are William D. Wyman, (1920—23), Merle D. Graves (1933—37), Joseph M. Naughton (1937—39), Robert W. McCracken (1944—46), and William F. Leonard (1950—52). Since 1953, the chairman has been Forrest H. Judkins, of Lenox.

During World War I, the local Red Cross made surgical dressings, operated a supply and canteen service, and offered instruction in home nursing and first aid. Headquarters during the war were at 42 Wendell Avenue, in the home of the late Mayor Allen H. Bagg, who offered rooms for Red Cross work. The Henry L. Dawes house on South Street was used as a work place for almost a year. Early in 1918, the chapter engaged its first full-time worker, Miss Caroline Cooper, who headed the surgical dressings department and became the chapter's first executive secretary.

During the fall of 1918, in the fearful influenza epidemic of that time, the local Red Cross chapter established at the South Street Inn Tea Room an emergency home for the children of sick parents. This was made possible by the generosity of Dr. and Mrs. Frank West, of Brooklyn. Food for the forty children in the emergency home, as well as for families heavily stricken with influenza, was prepared by the Community Canteen, organized by Mrs. John Barker and operating at St. Stephen's parish house.

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After the armistice in 1918, Red Cross activities underwent a change. The surgical dressings department turned to providing clothing, layettes, and other necessities for war refugees. Between World War I and II, activities were largely concentrated in the Home Service Department, which late in 1918 established itself in rooms of its own on North Street, in the Miller Building. This department occupied itself increasingly with the problems of returned veterans and their families, aiding them in many ways. At the same time, the local branch moved its headquarters from the Bagg house, obtaining rooms at a very low rental in the Bay State Block on Fenn Street.

Junior Red Cross started in the schools in the fall of 1921. Among other classes, one in home nursing was organized and taught in cooperation with the Visiting Nurse Association. The College Club contributed money for equipment. A life-saving station was operated by Red Cross at Pontoosuc Lake during the summers, starting in 1923. Swimming classes were taught on Wednesdays, with the Chamber of Commerce offering its rooms as headquarters. The Motor Corps was initiated in 1929 and made more than a hundred calls that year. Staff assistants began serving in 1931.

In the depression days of 1932, the Red Cross organized classes to teach mothers how to prepare "Better Meals for Less Money." A program to aid people in working small gardens was inaugurated. Distribution of government flour to those receiving food orders through recognized agencies was undertaken. In 1932, the local Red Cross distributed to many hundreds of needy families almost 10,000 bags of flour, 1,700 yards of cloth, and many jars for home canning, the jars being contributed by Pittsfield householders. Gray Lady service was organized in 1936, and the local chapter began transporting children to the Dental Clinic.

Retiring in 1937 as executive secretary, Miss Caroline Cooper was succeeded by Mrs. S. John O'Herron, who had been treasurer of the local Visiting Nurse Association. Mrs. O'Herron persuaded the county chapter that it should have a home of its



own, and it bought the house at 63 Wendell Avenue, moving there early in 1939.

At this time, seventy-five women were enrolled as staff assistants, each having a definite half-day assignment a month. The chapter continued its assistance to the Workshop for the Blind, begun in 1924. In 1940, after eight years of work, volunteers completed the translation of a three-volume book into Braille and presented it bound to the Workshop.

The outbreak of World War II again shifted the emphasis of Red Cross work. By March 1941, more than a thousand Pittsfield women were engaged in volunteer Red Cross work, sewing, knitting, crocheting, making surgical bandages, as well as carrying on the normal programs of home nursing, first aid, motor service, swimming classes, aid to the blind, and others.

A month after Pearl Harbor, the chapter established classes to train nurses' aides for work in four county hospitals—the House of Mercy and St. Luke's in Pittsfield, and those in North Adams and Adams. Within a year, ninety-three aides had been trained and were at work in these hospitals. In addition, more than 1,200 women were trained in home nursing.

The first Red Cross blood bank visit to the city occurred in April 1943. Almost 130 pints of blood were collected, to be processed into dry blood plasma for use by the armed forces. All blood visits during the war—one a week for a long period—were conducted at the Berkshire Museum. After the war, the blood program was turned to civilian uses. The chapter has never failed to meet its quota, having so far met the blood needs of every county resident.

Late in 1946, Red Cross volunteers in a service known as Entertainment and Instruction began making weekly visits to the Veterans' Hospital at Leeds near Northampton, entertaining the patients with games, parties, refreshments, and informal talk. The group visits the hospital every Wednesday evening, and on alternate Tuesdays. In 1954, they made seventy-five visits, being held up only once by weather. The group now knows the Pittsfield-Northampton route so well that it can tell anyone interested the exact number of turns in the road—121, in all.

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The Pittsfield branch of the Red Cross dissolved in September 1949, and the house at 63 Wendell Avenue became the headquarters of the county chapter. In 1950, a refresher course, designed to provide additional trained nurses in the event of a polio epidemic, was conducted with the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis. The next year, cooperating with Civil Defense, Red Cross typed the blood of more than 3,000 persons. The blood program was expanded to provide gamma globulin, a blood derivative very effective in preventing paralysis from polio.

On her death in 1953, Mrs. O'Herron was succeeded as executive secretary by Miss Anna M. Mahony, who had been in Red Cross work since 1943, coming to Pittsfield from Maine where she had been assistant administrative director of the state's defense blood program.

Late in 1954, the motor corps inaugurated a special service in Pittsfield, transporting retarded children to and from the classes established for them at Mercer School. Having withdrawn from the Community Chest in 1941 as necessitated by its special war work and appeals, the chapter rejoined in 1952.

The Red Cross is primarily a volunteer organization, and enrollment in the local chapters varies from year to year. During 1954, more than 3,500 volunteers worked for the Berkshire County chapter out of its headquarters in Pittsfield, being engaged in many services—Motor Service, Nurses' Aides, Canteen, Production and Supply, Nursing Service, Disaster, Staff Aides, Water Safety, First Aid, Junior Red Cross, Gray Ladies, and Social Welfare Aides.

### *Social Service Index*

A powerful adjunct of all the health and welfare agencies, public and private, is the Social Service Index. It was established during the dark days of the Depression, in 1931, upon the recommendation of two experts engaged by the Community Fund to survey relief conditions in the city. Sixteen organizations of various kinds—including the city and the state welfare departments, as well as three business concerns—became members of



the Index, each represented by two delegates with voting powers.

Dwight E. Jones, the first chairman, was succeeded in 1932 by Carl E. Cozzio, who served down to 1940. One of the founders of the Index, and a member of its Executive Committee ever since, was Charles H. Hodecker, who has been the city's Public Welfare commissioner since 1934.

The purpose of the Index was, and is, to provide a central information service, or exchange, where ages, birthplaces, addresses, and other statistical data are readily available regarding persons seeking help from the social agencies, and where these agencies may learn of each other's interest in the same families. The Index cards contain no information as to the client's problem, or the type and extent of the service given by the agencies. The service is designed to prevent duplication of effort and expense, and to promote careful and intelligent planning on the problems of families or individuals in need.

The Index now has forty-one members, ranging alphabetically from the American Legion to the Women's Club. A large part of the vital statistics on file in the Index comes from the agencies themselves. But information is also obtained from newspaper items and other public sources. The files are confidential except to member agencies and properly authorized persons.

During the 1930s, although it functioned as a separate organization, the Index was entirely financed by the Community Fund, and was governed by an Executive Committee of seven members. With increased Index membership, the Committee has been increased to twelve members.

Also, provision has been made to elect delegates-at-large. Such delegates constitute not more than a fifth of the total of delegates named by member organizations, which have two each. This enables the Index to draw upon the abilities and experience of those "who have rendered significant service to the community and who would further the welfare of the agency."

During World War II, with Mrs. Thomas F. Plunkett as chairman, the work of the Index was largely concerned with

those agencies specifically involved in war activities—with the Red Cross, in particular. It performed such special services as obtaining quickly the names and addresses of servicemen when emergencies arose; discovering the addresses of relatives who had moved, or of widows who had remarried, when the question arose of returning bodies of the war dead to America; and supplying the answers to many difficult problems.

All of the city's public and private welfare agencies, Chest and non-Chest, regularly use the Index. At the present time, it draws about 90 per cent of its financial support from the United Community Chest. The remainder is borne by the Red Cross, the City Welfare Department, and various welfare agencies. The present chairman, Lawrence W. Peirson, succeeded Mrs. Thomas F. Plunkett in 1946.

### *Pittsfield General Hospital*

Opened in 1875 and long the only hospital in Pittsfield, the kindly-remembered and well-named House of Mercy at the far end of North Street was renamed the Pittsfield General Hospital in 1949.

In its opening year, the House of Mercy had 22 patients. During 1915, its buildings and facilities having been greatly expanded, it cared for more than 2,000 patients. An out-patient clinic had been established in 1882 through the generosity of Zenas M. Crane, of Dalton. In 1889, the Henry W. Bishop 3rd Memorial Training School for Nurses began instruction in a building erected close by, connected with the House of Mercy by an enclosed corridor. Of the hospital's 150 beds in 1915, 51 were endowed; 85 of the rooms had been furnished by churches, organizations, and individuals.

As World War I approached, the hospital instituted classes in first aid and home nursing. A central diet kitchen, with a serving room, was installed. At this time, its old horse-drawn ambulance was replaced with one motor-driven. In 1918, having served as superintendent for eight years, Miss Mary Marcy resigned to do war work, being replaced by Miss Fanny C. Smith, who was succeeded the next year by Miss Ida J. Anstead.



After the war, in 1919, the first bazaar for the benefit of the hospital was held in the Armory, netting \$8,400. Two years later was held the first "Bargain Week" to raise money, and it proved so successful that it was made an annual affair.

Hospital expenses had so increased that for the first time the House of Mercy was obliged to borrow money to meet running expenses. With the aid of the Hospital Auxiliary organized in 1923, a fund-raising campaign was conducted, which brought in \$328,000 and cleared the House of Mercy of debt and provided means for essential repairs. Meantime, in 1921, Senator W. Murray Crane of Dalton had left the hospital a legacy of \$50,000.

In 1919, the hospital engaged its first anesthetist. It installed a central heating plant in 1920 and completed the Sampson Memorial Building for contagious diseases. In 1921, a room for records was established. Later, an automatic sprinkler system for fire protection and an electrocardiograph machine—the first in the area—were installed.

Resigning as superintendent in 1924, Miss Ida J. Anstead was succeeded by Miss Clara B. Peck, who administered the hospital for sixteen years. In 1924, the House of Mercy received \$90,000 as a gift from Miss Anna B. Shaw of Lenox and a legacy of more than \$92,000 from Miss Annie B. Clapp of Pittsfield. With this legacy, the hospital built and opened the next year the Annie B. Clapp Memorial Dormitory for Nurses. In 1928, for the first time in the history of the hospital, a man was elected to the governing body—former Mayor Charles W. Power, who was made treasurer.

The hospital was enlarged in 1932 with the opening of the Edward A. Jones Memorial Wing. In 1934, a doctors' lounge was built in memory of Dr. Henry Colt.

The Great Depression of the 1930s faced the House of Mercy with grave problems. All hospital salaries were cut 10 per cent as an economy measure. At the same time, the calls on the hospital increased, especially in the out-patient clinic, which had to be enlarged. A new admitting office was built in 1935. Clinics for dental extraction and for venereal disease opened in 1937,

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as well as a course for student dietitians, one of five such courses approved in the state.

During World War II, the hospital established the first blood plasma bank in the county. Seventy-five members of the staff left for war duty. To meet the emergency, refresher courses for nurses were instituted, and also Red Cross Gray Lady and Nurses' Aide courses. The Nursing School operated as part of the program of the United States Cadet Nurse Corps.

The post-war years brought the hospital increased responsibilities. The X-ray department was expanded to include deep X-ray therapy. The emergency room was relocated in the Jones wing. The building known as "II West" was renovated as a modern pediatric unit; "I West" was also completely remodeled and modernized, as was the main lobby. A physical therapy department was established on the second floor of the Sampson Memorial Building.

In 1952, for the first time, a budget of more than \$1,000,000 was accepted by the board of directors. The next year, an alcoholism clinic, sponsored by the State Public Health Department, was established in the out-patient department.

Having served as superintendent for 19 years, Miss Clara B. Peck resigned in 1943 and was succeeded by Miss Edith Atkin. Upon Miss Atkin's resignation the next year, Dr. Reo J. Marcotte was appointed as administrator, serving until 1953, when the present administrator, Harold L. Hutchins, Jr., took office. In 1954, the 5-day 40-hour work week went into effect for all the hospital staff.

During the year ending September 30, 1955, Pittsfield General admitted more than 7,000 patients, whose average stay was about eight days. With its facilities taxed by the growing number of patients and the increased requirements of modern medicine and surgery, the hospital launched early in 1956 a campaign to obtain \$1,500,000 for an expansion and modernization program, which would increase its rated bed capacity by 50 or more and improve its laboratories, operating rooms, clinics, nursing units, and other facilities. Previously, late in 1955, Pittsfield General had received a grant of \$85,000 from the Ford



Foundation, which also gave grants to the city's two other hospitals, St. Luke's and Hillcrest.

### *Hillcrest Hospital*

Hillcrest, Pittsfield's next oldest hospital, was founded in 1908 by Dr. Charles H. Richardson, a surgeon of the city, who conducted it for a time as a private enterprise, taking only surgical cases. It grew out of his and others' belief that hospital accommodations in the county were insufficient for the increasing demands made upon them.

The hospital was incorporated in 1910 as a public charitable institution and soon changed from being a solely surgical to a general hospital. Its building at the corner of North Street and Springside Avenue had a maximum capacity of 24 beds. During its first two years, Hillcrest cared for more than 1,000 patients. In 1919, an annex was added to the main building, which was renovated in 1925 and again in 1943. A nurses' home on North Street had been established in 1929.

In the late 1940s, the hospital was left \$350,000 in the will of Edward Benedict Cobb, a retired New York lawyer who had spent his summers in Pittsfield. Using this and other funds, Hillcrest bought the Salisbury estate on Tor Court, overlooking beautiful Onota Lake, in the western part of Pittsfield. The mansion on the estate was remodeled into a modern hospital with a hundred beds. Several thousand people attended its formal opening in 1950.

Late in 1955, Hillcrest received from the Ford Foundation a grant of \$49,800 to expand its facilities. Since 1951, S. Chester Fazio, long experienced in community hospital organization, has been administrator.

### *St. Luke's Hospital*

The now large St. Luke's Hospital grew out of small and modest beginnings in 1916, when Bishop Thomas D. Beaven of the Roman Catholic Springfield diocese bought property on Springside Avenue, using for the purpose a bequest left to the

bishopric by a clergyman interested in charitable causes, the Reverend Charles J. Boylan.

On the property stood two frame buildings, which were remodeled and dedicated as the Boylan Memorial Hospital, with the Sisters of Providence in charge. A School of Nursing was established.

As more were applying to the hospital than could be admitted, Bishop Beaven late in 1917 bought the large Allen estate on East Street and deeded it to the Sisters of Providence. The mansion on the grounds was remodeled into a 28-bed hospital. In February 1918, Father Bernard S. Conaty of St. Joseph's dedicated the new hospital, christening it St. Luke's in honor of the patron saint of physicians. It was to be used as a maternity hospital, while medical and surgical cases would continue to be treated at the Boylan Memorial Hospital.

In 1922, finding its facilities inadequate, St. Luke's launched a drive to erect a modern hospital building on the southeast corner of its East Street property. Ground was broken in 1923, and the first patients were admitted on May 1, 1926.

A five-storied structure of dark Barrington brick and limestone, the hospital had 75 private rooms and 12 wards. Patients were transferred here from the Boylan Memorial Hospital, which was sold. Supervision of the new St. Luke's was entrusted to Mother Mary of Providence, who guided the development of the hospital for six years, until 1932, when she retired to the Providence Mother House in Holyoke, being succeeded by Sister Mary Ciaran.

Shortly after its opening, the hospital received a free bed endowment from the Community War Chest Fund and from the *Eagle* Tobacco Fund to provide care for ex-servicemen and Red Cross nurses of World War I. The Knights of Columbus later made a similar endowment.

In 1927, steps were taken to organize a medical staff. Fifty-six doctors signified their interest and were accepted for the active and associate staffs. Regulations and policies for the government of the staff were formulated in accordance with the standardization of hospitals required by the American College



of Surgeons. As there were no internes available, a young physician, Dr. Francis J. Vaccaro, served as resident physician out of office hours.

As the hospital was heavily mortgaged, a plan was devised in 1929 to levy an assessment on the Catholic parishes of the county for ten years to create a fund for the payment of the interest and part of the principal. In 1931, St. Luke's placed a memorial tablet in the hospital corridor as a tribute to the memory of the Reverend Charles J. Boylan, whose generosity had made possible the establishment of the first Catholic hospital in Berkshire County.

During World War II, Civil Defense authorities named the hospital as an emergency station for casualties. In 1942, collaborating with the local Red Cross, 142 volunteer aides were trained to assist in emergencies. As a result of blackout regulations, an emergency generator was installed so that vital departments in the hospital could continue to operate if the city lighting system should fail. A refresher course was offered for nurses who had not practiced their profession for years. A blood bank was opened, and more than a hundred donors responded the first year. In June 1944, the Federal government sponsored the Cadet Nurse Corps. The hospital trained 77 cadets before August 1946, when the program was discontinued.

The hospital has a bed capacity of 185. It has a School of Medical Technology, and a School of Anesthesiology for Nurses. In 1955, St. Luke's received a grant of \$69,300 from the Ford Foundation to expand its facilities and training programs.

In the new hospital's first full year of operation in 1927, 3,164 patients were cared for. By 1940, the number of patients had almost doubled. During 1955, the hospital cared for almost 10,000 patients. The supervisors of St. Luke's since 1934 have been Sister Mary Philomena (1934—1942), Sister Mary Louise (1942—1952), and the present Mother Superior, Sister Marie Reparatrice.

The St. Luke's School of Nursing admitted its first class—just six members—at the Boylan Memorial Hospital early in 1917. As the hospital expanded, the number of applicants grew

proportionately, reaching a peak in the fall class of 1948, when 41 students enrolled. Ground was broken for a new nurses' home in 1949 on the old Brewster estate adjoining the hospital. The building, opened in 1951 as Madonna Hall, accommodates almost 170 nurses and 26 faculty members.

Late in 1952, the hospital bought the former Clapp property at 309 East Street for purposes of expansion. Eventually, according to present plans, it will be used as a convent for the Sisters.

### *Coolidge Memorial Hospital*

Pittsfield had another hospital for almost half a century, down to 1953, when it closed its doors. It grew out of the work of the Pittsfield Anti-Tuberculosis Association, organized in 1907 largely through the initiative of Dr. Frederick S. Coolidge, a brilliant orthopaedist, who was suffering from the disease and eventually died of it. The association was incorporated in 1912.

At first, a clinic for the care of the tubercular was established under a visiting nurse who treated patients in their homes. In 1912, the association purchased 53 acres southwest of the city, near Lebanon Avenue, and there established an open air camp. The large farmhouse on the property was converted into a sanatorium.

In 1915, with funds left under the will of Dr. Coolidge, construction began on the Frederick Shurtleff Coolidge Memorial Hospital, which was built near the farmhouse. Mrs. Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, widow of Dr. Coolidge, gave \$100,000 to endow the sanatorium and the memorial hospital. Together, the buildings could care for about thirty patients.

One of the spectacular advances of modern medicine has been the prevention and cure of tuberculosis. In recent years there was a steady decline in patients seeking care at the Coolidge Memorial Hospital, and in 1953 it closed its doors, having served its purpose well. The property has since been sold.

### *Riggs Clinic*

A community health agency of growing importance is the Riggs Clinic of Berkshire County, a development of the work



begun in 1907 at Stockbridge by Dr. Austen Fox Riggs, a noted psychiatrist, one of the pioneers in mental health. In 1920, the Austen Riggs Foundation established a mental hygiene and neurological clinic at the House of Mercy Hospital, now Pittsfield General.

In 1923, a Social Service Department and a Child Guidance Clinic were provided. The clinics operated to capacity from 1920 to 1925, in which year they moved from the Miller Building to larger quarters in the Butler Building on East Street. The growing number of patients necessitated an increase of staff from one social worker and a secretary to three social workers and two secretaries. The Austen Riggs Center provided the services of its psychiatrists, psychologists, and clinic directors.

The Riggs Clinic was admitted to the Pittsfield Community Chest in 1938, but this did not solve the institution's financial problems, which came to a head early in 1948 when the Austen Riggs Center decided that, as its principal objective was mental health research and treatment of patients in residence at Stockbridge, it would discontinue its out-patient treatment of Pittsfield and Berkshire County residents.

The clinic's Pittsfield Advisory Committee engaged an expert, Dr. Abraham Z. Barhash, to make a survey of the value of the clinic, its relation to the community, and its method of operation. The Barhash report recommended that the clinic be continued—but as a community clinic, rather than as a branch of the Austen Riggs Center. The recommendation was accepted, and in 1950 the Riggs Clinic was incorporated as a non-profit psychiatric service. The Junior League of Pittsfield contributed \$2,500 to its support, and later another substantial sum. While the Austen Riggs Center still bears much of the cost, the Pittsfield Community Chest increasingly allocates more to meet operating deficits. The Community Chests of other Berkshire communities contribute. The institution continues to receive professional direction from and the services of outstanding psychiatrists and psychologists at the Austen Riggs Center.

## *Churches*

**C**HURCH INFLUENCE IN PITTSFIELD has been strong from the beginning, ever since the 1760s when the first meeting-house, a crude wooden structure, was built approximately where the First Church of Christ, Congregational now stands on Park Square.

At that time, the Congregational church was the official church in Massachusetts, as in early Puritan days. It had special status and privileges which it enjoyed down to 1832 when all denominations in the Commonwealth were placed upon an equal footing as voluntary fellowships. Long before that happened, "heretics" had come to live in Pittsfield and were tolerated—Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians, and Shakers, among the first.

Occasional Catholic services were held in Pittsfield in the 1830s, conducted in private houses by visiting priests. The communicants were largely Irish workers who had come to help in building the present Boston and Albany railroad. St. Joseph's parish was organized in 1844 and erected a small wooden church on Melville Street. Growing slowly, the parish began building in 1864 its present large stone church on North Street, completing it in 1889. Meantime, in 1869, a Jewish congregation had been established—the Society Anshe Amonim—and two more were formed by 1916.



With the rapid growth of the city and its industries came new large groups to man the factories—principally Italian, Polish, and French Canadian. Almost all of these were Catholic in belief. To provide for them, the original St. Joseph's parish has had to be divided many times. There are now ten Roman Catholic parishes in the city. Wholly Protestant down to the 1840s, Pittsfield today has also a large and active Catholic church membership.

*Protestant*

*First Church of Christ, Congregational*

By far the oldest congregation in the city, the First Church of Christ, Congregational, celebrated its 150th birthday in 1914. It then occupied, as it still does, the grey stone structure built in 1853 on the north side of Park Square, approximately on the site of the first small wooden meetinghouse erected by the infant community in the 1760s, for many decades the only house of worship in the town. In 1916, with the Reverend James E. Gregg as pastor, the church observed the 100th anniversary of its New Year's sunrise prayer meeting, in which the pastors and the members of many other churches participated.

During World War I, more than 100 members of the First Church entered the armed forces. Six of them lost their lives in service, and their names are preserved on a bronze plaque in the church. The congregation contributed much to Red Cross activities and other war work.

In 1918, the Reverend Mr. Gregg departed to become principal of Hampton Institute, the renowned Negro school at Hampton, Virginia. Later, he ministered to a church in Waterbury, Connecticut. Upon his retirement, he returned to Pittsfield to make his home in the city until he died in 1946, mourned by his former parishioners and a multitude of friends as a "man of truly saintly character."

The First Church was fortunate in its choice of Pastor Gregg's successor—the Reverend Hugh Gordon Ross. Born and brought up in Scotland, he had served two pastorates in South Africa and one on our West Coast before coming to Pittsfield, bringing to his sermons and his other pastoral work a broad and

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diversified background. Thinking that many people hesitated to come to church but were eager for some religion, he initiated a series of non-denominational Sunday evening services at the Union Square Theatre, which continued for several years and were conceded to be "of great benefit to all the churches."

Less conservative in some of his ideas than his more strict parishioners, Pastor Ross pained their consciences a bit by allowing his children to engage in sports on Sunday afternoons. On occasion, he enjoyed a game of bridge and a good cigar. During his pastorate, a few of the old puritanical bars came down and, as remarked by a church historian, Miss Lucy Ballard, "apparently nobody's soul suffered thereby."

Deciding to return to his native Scotland in 1928, Pastor Ross was succeeded by the Reverend John Gratton, whose pastorate—the third longest in the history of the church—continued for twenty-four years. They were difficult years, embracing as they did the Great Depression of the 1930s, World War II, and the Korean War.

In 1930, soon after the new pastor assumed office, a committee was appointed to undertake the rebuilding of the parish house. The onset of the Depression made this obviously impossible, and the committee resigned in 1932. At the same time, however, the congregation set aside \$10,000 as the nucleus of a Parish House Fund.

Up to this time, in accordance with an ancient Puritan tradition, the church had been financed in large part by the rental of pews. There had been increasing objections to this, and the question had been debated again and again. Finally, in 1934, the congregation voted to do away with this undemocratic system, and the pews became free. "Contrary to the fears of many," as Miss Ballard noted, "the financial situation of the church has not deteriorated."

The celebration of the 175th anniversary of the First Church in 1939 revived enthusiasm for erecting a new parish house. A building committee was appointed, and plans were under way. But the project again had to be postponed with the advent of World War II.



Many younger men and women of the parish—172, in all—entered the armed forces. Under a Servicemen's Committee headed by the pastor's wife, Mrs. John Gratton, the congregation organized Red Cross work and other activities to aid and comfort those serving in our military forces and those of our allies. A bronze plaque in the church, dedicated in 1947, bears the names of the nine members of the congregation who gave their lives during the war.

Immediately after the war, the question of a new parish house was taken up once more. A building committee was appointed early in 1946. It also became evident that the old organ installed in 1912 was rapidly wearing out, and that \$40,000 would be needed to rebuild it. A campaign for funds began in 1950, and more than \$150,000 was soon raised in cash and pledges.

The interior of the old parish house joined to the church at the rear was entirely removed, leaving only the outer walls. A second story to provide many additional classrooms was installed in what had been the high-ceilinged auditorium. Better kitchen and other facilities were added. The remodeled parish house was dedicated early in 1952 to the triumphant peals of the church's new organ.

In 1919, a house at 130 Wendell Avenue had been bought to serve as a parsonage. It continued to be used down to 1952 when the church was given a house at 152 Wendell Avenue in the will of Mrs. E. A. Jones, and the old parsonage was sold. A house was bought on Wellesley Street for the use of the assistant minister.

Shortly after the completion of the new parish house which he had done so much to promote, the Reverend Mr. Gratton resigned. Wishing to take a smaller church, he assumed the pastorate of the Congregational Church in Old Hadley, where he soon died. His successor at the First Church, the present pastor, the Reverend William Coolidge Hart, had been a chaplain in the Air Force during World War II. He then served for five years as associate minister in Boston's historic old South Church

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before being recalled to service in the Korean conflict. He entered his ministry at First Church early in 1953. The Reverend Robert B. Dennett is associate minister.

The by-laws of the church, slightly amended in 1938, were again amended in 1945 when a new office was created—that of Moderator, with Sheridan R. Cate first serving in the post. A new set of by-laws was adopted in 1953, under which the church and the parish were completely merged at last. The Standing Committee of the parish became the Executive Board of the church and assumed the governmental functions previously performed by the parish. At the same time, the congregation changed its name to the First Church of Christ in Pittsfield, Congregational.

For a half century, the French Evangelical Church and the Italian mission had held their services in the First Church in their native languages under their own pastor. But as more and more in this group learned English, the need for separate services declined. Early in 1955, these separate churches were dissolved and all members received into the First Church. Their pastor for thirty-eight years, the Reverend Ulrich Gay, became associate to the ministers.

On January 1, 1956, the First Church continued one of the community's oldest traditions by celebrating the 140th consecutive observance of its annual New Year's Sunrise Prayer Meeting, in which the ministers and members of many denominations participate in a heartening example of Christian brotherhood.

### *South Congregational*

In 1848, because the congregation of the First Church had grown so large that it could not be accommodated in the old Bulfinch meetinghouse on Park Square, it was agreed that some members might withdraw and organize another congregation.

Becoming the South Congregational Church, they began building a meetinghouse on upper South Street, next to the old Union meetinghouse. During construction, fire broke out and utterly destroyed both buildings. Starting again, they erected



and, in 1850, dedicated the handsome wooden church in which the congregation has since worshipped. Originally, the building had a tall white steeple, long a landmark in the town. But a winter gale took it down early in 1882 and it was not replaced, the present belfry being substituted.

The growth of the church was steady, and by 1916 its congregation numbered almost 730 members, ministered to by the Reverend Payson Pierce, who came to the church in 1908 and remained until 1923, being succeeded by the Reverend Vincent G. Burns.

After World War I, a \$45,000 building and improvement program was undertaken. To provide more space for the Sunday School and for group activities, plans were drawn for a new parish house. At first, only the basement was built and a boiler installed so that the sanctuary might have steam heat. Much work was done to repair and renovate the church. The sanctuary was rearranged and an organ installed, the gift of Mrs. J. S. Wolfe and her daughter May in memory of Deacon Wolfe and a daughter, Minnie.

In 1921, the church held its first annual Christmas carol vesper service. This beautiful service usually filled the church to overflowing and was held every year until 1953, when Anthony Reese resigned as director of choirs, having served for 41 years. Music at South Church suffered another blow in 1953 when its organist for almost 35 years, C. Philip Goewey, left to make his home in the South. During the late 1920s, under the Reverend Robert G. Armstrong, the church successfully carried out a vigorous building program. Thanks largely to the tireless work of the women's organizations, the congregation completed and furnished the parish house, which was dedicated in 1930.

In the early 1930s the custom was established of exchanging pulpits with Temple Anshe Amonim, a Jewish congregation. South Church now unites with the First Baptist Church for services during summer months. Under its next minister, the Reverend Russell B. Richardson, monthly Family Night suppers were instituted. A church paper, the *Chronicler*, began publication in 1937. Rechristened the *Epistle* and written largely for

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laymen, the semi-monthly paper has grown to several pages of ministerial comment, announcements, and church news.

The first successful men's group at South Church, and perhaps the first in any local church, was the Men's Brotherhood, organized in 1939. At its annual meeting in May, the group makes a Civic Award to a local person who has served Pittsfield outstandingly. The first citation went to the late Mayor Allen H. Bagg. One woman has won the award—Mrs. I. S. F. Dodd, for her volunteer work in transcribing books into Braille for the blind.

Dying in 1939, Robert H. Bartlett, a member of the congregation since 1873, left his entire estate to the church. The auditorium in the parish house was named Bartlett Hall as a memorial to him.

Leaving to become a chaplain in World War II, the Reverend Mr. Richardson was succeeded by the Reverend Floyd L. Roberts, who had just returned from Japan where he and his wife had been doing educational and missionary work. During his ministry, a member of the church anonymously gave money to replace the greenish-yellow glass in the windows with clear glass and to install inside shutters, which restored the windows to their original New England simplicity of style. The sanctuary had to be completely restored a few years later when a large part of the ceiling fell during a thunderstorm, crushing pews and causing considerable other damage.

In June 1950, the Reverend Mr. Roberts was killed in an automobile accident while returning with his wife from a pastoral call in North Adams. The pastor's tragic death threw a pall of sorrow over the church's celebration of its 100th anniversary in November 1950. But the occasion was duly marked with special services and a banquet. The pastor's widow, May Roberts, after recovering from critical injuries, returned to Japan to teach at Kobe College.

The minister since early 1951 has been the Reverend Raymond E. Gibson, a young man serving his second pastorate. His assistant as associate minister for education has been the Reverend Herbert W. Keebler, Jr.



In the fall of 1953, South Church became the first Protestant church in the city to establish a released-time program of religious education for high school students. The church now has two services on Sunday mornings. The second is broadcast over local Station WBEC twice a month.

### *Second Congregational*

The Second Congregational Church, a Negro congregation, was founded in 1846 with seven members—four men and three women. The congregation bought and reconstructed the old Wesleyan Methodist Church on First Street, and for decades worshipped there. A former slave, the Reverend Samuel Harrison, became pastor in 1849 and, except for service as a chaplain with the Union forces during the Civil War, occupied the pulpit to his death in 1901.

His successor was the Reverend T. Nelson Baker, who served for thirty-eight years, down to 1939, when he was succeeded by the present pastor, the Reverend Harold L. Nevers. In 1941, the congregation moved its place of worship from the old building on First Street to the John A. White house at the corner of Columbus Avenue and Onota Street. In 1946, the centenary of its founding, the congregation opened a campaign to raise funds for building a new and more adequate house of worship, with facilities for youth and other activities adjoining.

### *Pilgrim Memorial, Congregational*

The Pilgrim Memorial Church grew out of a Sunday School established in 1863 by the First Church in a schoolhouse on Peck's Road. Organized by seventy-nine members in 1897, the congregation called the Reverend Raymond Calkins to become pastor, and in 1898 built and dedicated its present church, a pleasing stone structure on Wahconah Street.

The Reverend James E. Gregg became pastor in 1903. From 1909 until 1917 the Reverend Warren S. Archibald ministered to the parish, when he was succeeded by the Reverend Harold G. Vincent, who served until 1926.

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During the next pastorate, that of the Reverend Kenneth D. Beckwith, the Jane Austen Russell Parish Hall was built and dedicated as a center of religious, social, community, and recreational activities. In 1932, the Reverend Wilfred H. Bunker became minister, serving until 1938 when he was succeeded by the Reverend Walter B. Wiley, who had long been a missionary to the families in the International Settlement at Istanbul, Turkey. Upon the Reverend Mr. Wiley's return to Turkey in 1946, he was succeeded by the present pastor, the Reverend Frank C. Van Cleef, Jr. The church still has nine of its charter members.

### *First Baptist*

Stemming from a Baptist society formed by Valentine Rathbun in 1772, the First Baptist Church, one of the oldest and largest churches in the city, had in 1954 a total membership of 1,379, and a resident membership of 1,201. Of its \$66,297 budget for the year, more than \$23,000 was spent to forward its missionary program.

The pastor of the church from 1908 to 1918, the Reverend Charles P. MacGregor, was succeeded by the Reverend Maurice A. Levy, who came from the Greene Avenue Baptist Church in Brooklyn, New York. During the latter's pastorate, which continued to 1932, the congregation sold for \$145,000 its old church, long a landmark on North Street where the Onota Building now stands, and purchased a new site at the corner of South and Church streets.

A large parish house and educational building was completed at the rear of this lot in 1926. The assembly hall in this building was used for church services until 1930 when the church proper was completed—a large brick structure comfortably seating more than 800 people.

The Reverend Paul L. Sturgis, a recent graduate of the Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, came to minister to the parish in 1932. During his pastorate, the church increased its membership, revised its constitution, adopted a Sunday morning unified service in two parts—the Church at Worship, and the Church



at Study—and had its funds increased by a surprisingly large bequest of approximately \$400,000 from the estate of Nelson J. Lawton, a devoted member of the congregation. Contemporaries knew Lawton as a frugal businessman, but it was assumed that he was possessed of merely moderate means. As requested by him, \$20,000 of the bequest was set aside to provide income for the support of music in the church.

In 1943, upon the departure of the Reverend Mr. Sturgis for Redlands, California, the church called its present pastor, the Reverend Christian B. Jensen, who had been serving at the First Baptist Church in Poughkeepsie, New York.

Previously, in 1937, the congregation had enlarged its staff to include a director of education, naming Miss Bettina Gilbert to the post. Resigning in 1942, she was succeeded by Miss B. Myra Whittaker. Upon the latter's departure, the congregation decided to install an associate minister to have charge of the church's educational program and youth work. The associate ministers have been the Reverends Phillips B. Henderson and Herbert J. Murray, Jr.

In 1946 the church joined in the crusade of the American Baptist Convention (then the Northern Baptist Convention) to raise funds for a missionary program known as the "World Mission Crusade." The local church pledged almost \$25,000. In 1951 the church adopted a new form of financing known as the "sector project" and continued this method for three years, raising the contributions of church members by almost half.

The church maintains close affiliations with the American Baptist Convention, the Massachusetts Baptist Convention, the Massachusetts Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., and the World Council of Churches. In 1946, the local church entertained the Massachusetts Baptist Convention for its annual meeting.

### *First Methodist*

Methodist meetings were held in Pittsfield as early as 1788. Regular services were held after the formal organization of a congregation in 1791. The congregation built a church on West

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Street in 1800, moving to East Street in 1829 and in 1852 to a new and larger church at the corner of Fenn and First streets, where the congregation worshipped for more than twenty years.

The present First Methodist Church, at the head of Allen Street, was dedicated in 1874. For many years it offered the only auditorium of any size in the community and was used frequently for lectures, concerts, and civic celebrations. The mortgage on this large church was burned with prayers and happy ceremony in 1911. In 1914, during the pastorate of the Reverend John A. Hamilton, an offshoot of the church, the Trinity Methodist, was established in the rapidly growing Morningside section to the northeast.

Dr. Hamilton was succeeded as pastor of the First Methodist Church in 1917 by the Reverend Franklin J. Kennedy, who remained until 1922, when he was called to the First Methodist Church in New Haven and was succeeded by the Reverend M. Stephen James. During these years, an innovation of consequence was made in the church—"the best investment this church ever made," declared one of its parishioners and historians, Miss Mary A. Bristol.

Dr. Kennedy suggested to the Official Board the appointment of a woman as the pastor's assistant—Mrs. Mary M. S. Haviland. The suggestion was adopted, and for seven years Mrs. Haviland helped minister to the needs of the congregation, organizing the Women's Council, a most effective unit in the work of the church. Mrs. Haviland, in turn, was responsible for another far-reaching innovation. Fifty women joined her in signing the following letter to the pastor in 1927:

Dear Mr. James:

The undersigned members of the First Methodist Church of this city desire to express to you their opinion that the time has come when the women of the church, who have long borne the burden of the work, should have some voice in its business affairs and the methods of conducting the same, and we firmly believe that this opinion is shared by a majority, if not all, of the women members of the church.



We therefore request your consideration of this matter, and if it meets with your approval and that of your Official Board, we would suggest that some of the representative women of the church be appointed to said Board as there may be opportunity to make such appointments.

It does not appear whether this radical departure from tradition upset the brethren on the Board or not. In any case, the recommendation was accepted and women were seated on the Board, "although I have noticed," wrote Miss Bristol some years later, "that at Board meetings the women seem to sit on one side of the room for the most part, and the men on the other, reminding one of the meetings the Shakers used to hold. But everything is harmonious, apparently."

Also during Dr. James' pastorate, the sanctuary was thoroughly remodeled at a cost of \$110,000 and rededicated in 1925, with the sermon preached by Bishop Adna Wright Leonard of Albany. Two years later, \$100,000 was spent in remodeling and enlarging the parish house. Meantime, in 1922, the First Methodist Church, as part of its missionary work, had presented a new science building to the Chosen Christian College at Seoul, Korea.

Upon Dr. James' departure in 1931, he was succeeded by the Reverend C. Russell Prewitt, who remained during the difficult depression years, down to 1939, when he was called to another church and was replaced with the Reverend H. Elliott Chaffee.

During the latter's pastorate, in 1941, the church celebrated with a week of special services the 150th anniversary of the founding of Methodism in Pittsfield. At this time a Minister of Music was added to the staff, Mrs. Howard Fohrhaltz.

Taking over the parish in 1947, the Reverend Robert C. Howe remained until 1951. During these years the Church School adopted the Character Research Program of Union College, and the church appointed an Associate Minister of Education, Miss Dorothy Scholl.

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The present pastor, the Reverend Charles Walter Kessler, had been serving at the Freemont Street Church in Gloversville, New York, before coming to Pittsfield. His appointment was made by Bishop G. Bromly Oxnam.

In 1953, under the Reverend Dr. Kessler, the church raised \$100,000 to construct and equip a new Education Building on the east side of the church. Sunday morning classes in the Church School had been very crowded, with more than 300 people attending, divided into thirty-eight groups. Six classes had to meet simultaneously in the sanctuary, seven in the assembly hall, and seven in the dining room. Even the pastor's private office had to be pressed into service. The new Education Building was first used in September 1955.

The church liberalized its procedures in 1953 by granting women the right not only to vote for trustees but to hold that office. The Board of Trustees, as now constituted, includes a representative of the Women's Society of Christian Services, who is nominated and elected by her peers.

Two new modern parsonages have been acquired by the church. In 1953, a bequest by Miss Lottie Merry provided a house for the associate minister and his family at 152 Williams Street. The church sold in 1955 its old parsonage, an immense house on Bartlett Avenue, and purchased for the purpose a house of more modest proportions at 64 Marlboro Drive. In 1955, the First Methodist Church enlarged its mission staff by appointing a missionary to serve in Rhodesia, South Africa.

### *Trinity Methodist*

Trinity Methodist Church grew out of a Sunday School established by First Methodist Church in the Morningside section in 1900. The Sunday School met for a time in the curling rink on Woodlawn Avenue, but soon established itself in Trinity Chapel, a small building erected at the corner of Tyler and Plunkett streets.

In 1914, Trinity became a separate parish, with the Reverend Ralph B. Finley as pastor. The facilities of Trinity Chapel were greatly enlarged by constructing a temporary addition. Plans for



a larger and more permanent structure were drawn, but had to be postponed because of circumstances attending the outbreak of World War I.

After World War I, during the pastorates of the Reverends Robert B. Leslie, George M. Moody, and William B. Goodman, the congregation worked hard to augment its building fund, and in 1925 a new \$89,000 church at the corner of Woodlawn and Dalton avenues was dedicated. As the church was heavily mortgaged, this caused difficulties when the Depression struck and revenues declined.

During the 1940s, energetic campaigns were conducted to clear the debt, renovate the church, and improve its facilities—and with some success, though it was not till late in 1954 that the congregation celebrated “mortgage burning week.” At last, the church was free of financial difficulties that had burdened it so long. The present pastor is the Reverend Nelson M. Burns, who has been serving the parish since 1952.

### *St. Stephen's, Episcopal*

The first Episcopal parish in Pittsfield, organized in 1830, St. Stephen's dedicated its present red stone church on Park Square in 1890. Attached to the rear of the church, a parish house was built in 1916 at a cost of almost \$28,000.

The pastor of St. Stephen's from 1915 to 1924 was the Reverend Stephen Edwards Keeler, Jr., now Bishop Keeler, who came from Cleveland, where he had been curate at St. Paul's. He was also appointed by the Berkshire Convocation to be priest-in-charge at St. Martin's in the Morningside section and at St. Luke's, Lanesboro; Grace Church, Dalton; and St. Andrew's, Washington.

In 1924, the Reverend George Henry Heyn, a graduate of Trinity College and the Berkeley Divinity School, took charge of the parish, which bought a new rectory, paying \$14,000 for a house just completed at the corner of Appleton Avenue and Weston Street. In 1929, the church was redecorated and re-lighted. By 1930, its endowment fund exceeded \$70,000.

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At his death in 1933, the Reverend Heyn was succeeded as rector of the parish by the Reverend Ralph H. Hayden, who served for sixteen years, down to 1949, when he was succeeded by the Reverend Frederick Ward Kates. The present pastor, the Reverend Malcolm W. Eckel, took office in 1953.

Celebrating the 125th anniversary of its founding in 1955, St. Stephen's launched a campaign to raise \$150,000—more than \$162,000 was soon pledged—for the purpose of repairing the organ and of renovating and enlarging the parish house.

A lot on Allen Street between the parish house and the Central Fire Station was bought from the city for \$5,000, and plans for the large \$125,000 addition were drawn by Prentice Bradley, a parishioner and local architect. The remodeled and enlarged parish house will provide much needed space for meetings, church school classes, and other activities.

Having grown steadily through the years, St. Stephen's had more than 1,100 communicants in 1955, with almost 500 enrolled in its church school.

### *St. Martin's, Episcopal*

An Episcopalian mission in the Morningside section developed in 1909 into St. Martin's Church, with the Reverend Charles J. Sniffen as pastor. In 1911, a chapel was built on Woodlawn Avenue. The next year, St. Martin's was formally organized as a new parish and placed in charge of the Reverend Charles P. Otis, who also ministered to Grace Church in Dalton.

The congregation grew slowly, and in the 1930s improvements were made in the church building. A central heating system and new lighting were installed; the interior was redecorated. Under the Reverend William B. Sperry (1943—45), plans were drawn for a new church, to be erected at the corner of Dalton Avenue and Benedict Road on land donated to the Board of Missions. But as estimated costs ran too high, action was postponed. At length, the congregation decided to move its building on Woodlawn Avenue to the Dalton Avenue site, which was done in 1951. A wing was added to provide an office, a kitchen, a sacristy, and a choir room. Resigning as vicar in



1951, the Reverend William E. Arnold was succeeded by the present pastor, the Reverend Arthur R. Lynch, who had been at St. Paul's Church in Pawtucket, Rhode Island.

### *Lutheran*

Organized in 1859, the Protestant German Evangelical Church changed its name to Zion's Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1892, and in that year built and occupied its present brick church on First Street. Originally, the services were in German. The first sermon in English was preached in 1888 by the Reverend C. F. William Hoppe soon after he came to be pastor. In 1893, he was succeeded by the Reverend Werner L. Genzmer, whose pastorate extended over many years, down to 1923.

His successor was the Reverend Dr. Henry B. Dickert, the present pastor. In 1924, a new parish hall was dedicated, and the publication of a monthly, *Zion's News*, was begun. The congregation purchased in 1927 a house at the corner of Taconic Street and Pomeroy Avenue for use as a parsonage. A parlor for general use was added to the church in 1937. In 1942, the New York State Luther League held its annual convention in the church, the first time the League had met out of its own state. A thorough renovating of the church building began in 1955.

### *Unitarian*

The Unitarians organized in 1887 and for about twenty years had a church on North Street, above Bradford. In 1915, with Earl C. Davis as minister, they were meeting in a parish house, with upstairs dormitory and caretaker's apartment, at 45 Linden Street. The parsonage was in the rear, with wide lawns and a tennis court.

There was an active Women's Alliance and a young people's organization—the Francis David Fellowship. The Alliance was one of the Pittsfield women's clubs that established the People's Lecture Course. It is recorded that a Unitarian committee member who introduced the speaker to a capacity audience one win-

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ter evening did so after driving seven miles in a cutter and being tipped over in the snow when the horse shied at a watering trough on East Street. During the winter of 1917—18 the Unitarians joined other Protestant churches of the city in union services as an economy measure.

When the Reverend Mr. Davis left in 1919, he was succeeded by Charles R. Joy. During his pastorate, the Berkshire Chapter of the Unitarian Laymen's League was organized. Two members of the church arranged the first annual art exhibit in Pittsfield. In 1920, the church purchased the Peace Party House and its grounds at the corner of East Street and Wendell Avenue as a future church location, for the Linden Street facilities were no longer adequate.

Elliot L. Moses became minister in 1922 and by 1925 occupied the Peace Party House as a parsonage. Church activities centered in the new parish house erected behind the Peace Party House at 11 Wendell Avenue.

The next minister was George B. Spurr, who left in 1930. Henry G. Ives served from 1931 to 1937. He and his wife did much to restore the colonial charm of the Peace Party House, and opened it for many church activities.

In 1937 the church celebrated its 50th anniversary. A former minister of the church, Earl C. Davis, returned to conduct the service, and the address was given by the Reverend Dan H. Fenn, son of the church's first minister.

Subsequently, for two years, Truman L. Hayes served as minister. After his departure, services were conducted by laymen until they were discontinued in 1940.

Ten years later, in 1950, because of so many requests, the American Unitarian Association started services again in Pittsfield. They were so well attended that the church reorganized in 1951 and called David R. Kibby as minister. The next year, a committee started the Freedom Forum series of discussions, with lectures by eminent men and women.

Stirred with new vigor, the church and Sunday School outgrew the parish house and in 1954 moved to 175 Wendell Avenue, occupying a large house with adequate Church School



rooms, a beautiful auditorium, and a separate craft shop for teaching the handicapped, sponsored by the Brotherhood and Service Committee. The old parish house was sold to a Jewish congregation, Knesses Israel, which transformed it into a synagogue.

### *First Church of Christ, Scientist*

Formally organized in 1905, the First Church of Christ, Scientist, Pittsfield, Massachusetts, elected George D. Dutton as its first president. Sunday services and Wednesday evening meetings were held in the Merrill Building on North Street.

In 1907, the growing congregation bought the Bowerman house on South Street, transforming it into a church and reading room at a cost of \$15,000. The reading room was moved to the corner of North Street and Park Square in 1919, and to its present location on South Street in 1944.

Meantime, in 1919, a lot on Wendell Avenue had been purchased from the wardens of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, and here a \$135,000 church was dedicated in 1927. Funds for the construction of the church came from unsigned pledges given by members of the congregation, to be paid on a certain date. When the time came to meet the contractors' bills, there was always sufficient money on hand, so that the congregation did not have to go to the bank for the mortgage that had been arranged. When completed, the attractive new church, semi-Colonial in design, was free of liens and encumbrances. During the 1950s, new lighting was installed, and the interior re-decorated.

### *Seventh Day Adventist*

In the home of Lucy F. Myers on Sabbath (Saturday) afternoon, August 4, 1906, a small company of thirteen members was organized by Elder H. F. Ketring as the Seventh-Day Adventist Church of Pittsfield. The church ordained F. W. Stray as the local elder, and the ordinances of the Lord's Supper were celebrated. During the next few years, the church declined as members moved away or joined other churches. Regular preach-

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ing services ceased from 1910 to 1918, though a Sabbath School was regularly held.

In the summer of 1921, Elder Sidney Norton, pastor of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church at Springfield, held a tent revival in the eastern part of town. During the revival, Sabbath services were held in the tent. Afterward, the congregation met in a hired hall on North Street, at the rear of Clark's wallpaper store, later holding its meetings in the Odd Fellows' Hall on South Street. Elder W. R. Utchman came as pastor in 1927, and meetings were then moved to a rented building on the corner of Smith and Tyler streets.

In 1928, Elder C. P. Lillie, just returned from mission service in China, became pastor. The first Junior Missionary Volunteer Society for young people was organized by his wife, Sister Lillie, in 1934. At this time the place of meeting was changed to the Morningside Methodist Church, later to the upper room of the Unitarian Church on Wendell Avenue. Increased membership soon obliged the congregation to rent the main auditorium.

In 1940, when it became evident that even the main auditorium was becoming too small for the membership, a committee was appointed to seek a larger place of worship. In 1944, a \$5,000 church building fund was started, and the next year the congregation bought the Edmister property at 210 Wendell Avenue. The elementary school, or church day school, was moved from a cottage on South Mountain to a room in the new building.

During the late 1940s, under Elder Hans P. Gram's energetic leadership, two revivals were held, one in North Adams, which resulted in the establishment there of a branch Sabbath School.

Then followed a succession of pastors, each staying but a few years—Elder John F. Knipschild until 1952, Elder Willis Graves from 1953 to 1954, and the present pastor, Elder V. C. Brown, who came in August 1954. During these years the congregation remodeled and refurnished the church.



*Catholic*

*St. Joseph's*

The oldest of the Catholic parishes is St. Joseph's. The early congregation, largely Irish in descent, built a small wooden church on Melville Street in 1844. In 1864, it began building the large Gothic stone church on North Street that has been a landmark in the community for so long. Many difficulties, chiefly want of funds, delayed completion of the church until 1889.

In 1897 the parish built, just south of the church, a convent for the Sisters of St. Joseph. The Sisters established in their building in 1899 an academy which has grown into St. Joseph's Grammar School on North Pearl Street and the large St. Joseph's Catholic Central High School on Maplewood Avenue.

St. Joseph's has had only two pastors since 1913. The Reverend James Boyle served the parish from 1900 until his death in 1913. He was succeeded by Father Bernard S. Conaty, pastor for 27 years, later a Right Reverend Monsignor and the vicar general of the Springfield diocese.

On April 10, 1940, just a day before he would have celebrated the 58th anniversary of his ordination as a priest, Monsignor Conaty died at the age of 84, lamented by the whole city. His successor was the present pastor, the Reverend Charles L. Foley. Born and educated in North Adams, he had been ordained at the Grand Seminary in Montreal in 1910.

Under Father Foley, the parish carried out its long-cherished hope of building a new large Catholic high school. The \$400,000 building on Maplewood Avenue was dedicated in 1942.

During World War II, sixteen of the congregation lost their lives in service. In the early 1950s, St. Joseph's undertook an improvement program, renovating the church, the rectory, the convent, and the grammar school.

*Notre Dame*

The parish of Notre Dame de Bon Conseil, with a congregation predominantly French Canadian in origin, was founded in

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1867. It observed its 70th anniversary in 1937 by erecting a new parochial school across from the church on Melville Street and by remodeling an apartment building at the corner of First and Melville streets into a convent for the Sisters of the Holy Ghost, teachers at the school.

In 1876, French Roman Catholics in the city were worshipping in the original St. Joseph's church, a small wooden structure on Melville Street. In 1895, they began erecting on this site their present church, a handsome Romanesque structure. It was dedicated in 1897 by the pastor, the Reverend Amabile F. L'Hereux.

Upon the latter's death in 1901, the Reverend Clovis Baudoin became pastor. He was succeeded in 1910 by the Reverend Levi J. Achim, who ministered to the parish for thirty-four years, down to his death in 1944. His successor was the Reverend Leo E. Laviolette, who had been an assistant and later the administrator of the parish, directing the building of Notre Dame Parochial School. After a pastorate of four years, Father Laviolette died and was succeeded by the present pastor, the Reverend Albert T. Beaudry.

### *St. Charles'*

The first parish set off by St. Joseph's was St. Charles'. Organized late in 1893, the congregation first met in the old Coliseum, or Rink, as temporary quarters. Under its pastor, the Reverend Charles J. Boylan, the parish soon began building its present church, a brick structure on Briggs Avenue in the northwestern section of the city. The lower part was finished and mass was celebrated there late in 1894. Construction slowly continued on the upper part, and the completed edifice was dedicated on June 23, 1901, during the pastorate of the Reverend William H. Goggin. Meantime, the Noble house at the corner of North and Charles streets had been bought and transformed into a rectory.

After the transfer of Father Boylan to Hatfield in 1898, there were several short pastorates down to 1903, when the Reverend William J. Dower, pastor at St. Ann's in Lenox, came



to minister to St. Charles' for more than twenty years, until his death in 1926. During his pastorate, a campaign was started to build a parochial school. The campaign eventuated in the attractive St. Charles' School on Lenox Avenue, which opened for the fall term in 1924, with the Sisters of St. Joseph as teachers.

Under Father Dower's successor, the Reverend James P. Moore, who had been head of the Diocesan Mission Band, the lower church was remodeled and dedicated as a Chapel of St. Teresa of Lisieux. After his death in 1936, Father Moore was succeeded by the Reverend James W. McGrath, who came from St. Mary's in Turners Falls. The latter, in spite of difficult depression times, set about making extensive repairs to the rectory and convent, and reduced the parish debt to \$26,000. To him the parish owes its Perpetual Novena to Our Sorrowful Mother.

After a short pastorate, death claimed Father McGrath in 1940. He was succeeded by the present pastor, the Reverend Robert L. Ahern, who had been serving as Chancellor of the Springfield Diocese. In 1943, St. Charles' celebrated its golden jubilee with special ceremonies, including the burning of the mortgage on parish property. Since that time, new floors, new pews, and a new heating system have been installed in the church building, which has been completely renovated.

### *Mount Carmel, All Souls' Chapel*

In 1953, Our Lady of Mount Carmel parish celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its founding, receiving on the occasion a paternal apostolic blessing from Pope Pius XII. Appointed in 1903, the Reverend Eugene Giavina of Turin, Italy, was the first pastor.

The Italians in the city at the time were few and scattered, the majority living around "the Junction." Most of them were poor. For thirteen years the parish had no church building of its own, its members worshipping at St. Joseph's.

In 1912, the parish purchased the Daniel Dodge estate on Fenn Street for \$8,000 and converted the house into a chapel and rectory. The Congregation of the Stigmatine Fathers was

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placed in charge of the parish in 1915, with the Reverend Anthony Toniolli as pastor. Under him, ground was broken on the Fenn Street property for a new church, with the parishioners and the pastor doing much of the work with pick and shovel. The first mass in the lower church was held on Christmas Day, 1916.

Work on the \$125,000 upper church began in 1922, and Easter mass was celebrated there in 1924. Northern Italian Renaissance in style, designed by George E. Haynes, it is a large and distinctive church, having a campanile rising skyward a hundred feet, in which are hung three bells given by parishioners in 1923.

Upon the death of Father Toniolli in 1925, the pastor was the Reverend Charles J. Zanotti from 1926 to 1940. During his pastorate, in 1931, the first group of Venerini Sisters came to the parish to assist in instructing the youth. In 1940, the last lien on the church was paid off and the mortgage burned with rejoicing on St. Anthony's feast day.

Father Zanotti's successor was the Reverend Henry Gabos—better known to his parishioners as "Father Henry"—beloved for his zeal in visiting the sick. The parish had grievous losses at this time, for twenty-five of its men gave their lives in World War II. One of them had been an assistant in the church, the Reverend William S. Contino, chaplain of the 87th Mountain Infantry. Killed in action in Italy in 1945, he was later buried in Pittsfield.

Father Gabos died in 1946 and was succeeded by the Reverend Peter V. Torretta. A house of worship, All Souls' Chapel, was erected for the convenience of many Italians living in the Lakewood section. As building costs were high, a Quonset building seating 300 people was put up on Pembroke Avenue and dedicated in 1948, being Mount Carmel's first mission church. Its rector was the Reverend Camillo L. Santini, who had been assistant in the parish for four years. When Father Santini departed for the Pacific Coast in 1950, he was succeeded by the Reverend Carlo J. Bevilacqua. Father Santini soon returned to the parish, becoming its pastor in 1952 when Father Torretta



was transferred to Springfield to minister to the Mount Carmel church there.

In preparation for its Golden Jubilee in 1953, the interior of Mount Carmel was renovated. Modern lighting fixtures were installed. To commemorate the occasion, parishioners gave many gifts to the church, including lanterns, vestments, a bronze tabernacle, altar cloths, and candlesticks.

In 1953, the church bought from the city one of its old public school buildings, the Read, which extended the church property to Second Street. Improved and modernized, the building opened as the Mount Carmel Parochial School in September 1954, with the Venerini Sisters as teachers. The parish now plans to provide a new rectory for the priests and a new convent for the nuns.

### *St. Mark's*

The fifth Catholic parish to be established in the city was St. Mark's, which was set off from St. Joseph's in 1913. Its first pastor was the Reverend Michael J. Leonard, who had been serving as an assistant at St. Joseph's. Father Leonard ministered to the parish for more than forty years, until his death late in 1955.

The congregation originally worshipped in a wooden chapel built near the corner of West and Onota streets. Still standing, the chapel has been used as a parish hall since 1932 when a new St. Mark's was built on West Street. Gothic in line and constructed of granite, it is a large church, seating 700 or more people, being the center of religious life for Catholics living in the "West Part." A house on Onota Street, bought in 1913, serves as the rectory. On May 17, 1938, St. Mark's celebrated its Silver Jubilee, with more than 1,000 members attending a solemn high mass.

### *St. Mary of the Morning Star*

The rapid growth of the Catholic Church in Pittsfield in the early 1900s necessitated the creation of another parish—that of St. Mary of the Morning Star, established in 1915 with the

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Reverend Jeremiah A. Riordan as pastor. The congregation celebrated its first mass in the Tyler Theatre on Easter that year.

Construction soon began on a combination church and school building on Plunkett Street, which was dedicated in 1919. The first floor served as a church. The upper floor, designed to be used as a school, was not employed for that purpose until later. A frame building on Tyler Street was purchased for use as a rectory.

Father Riordan was transferred to St. Mary's at Westfield in 1925, being succeeded by the Reverend James P. Curran, who in turn was succeeded by the Reverend Matthew L. Boyne in 1931. The depression years that followed down to Father Boyne's death in 1940 were trying ones both for the church and its parishioners.

The next pastorate was that of the Reverend John C. McMahon, the only Pittsfield native to head the parish. In 1941, he established St. Mary's Parochial School on the second floor of the combination church-school building. His plans for a new St. Mary's Church were scarcely under way when he was transferred in 1942 to the Holy Rosary Church at Holyoke, being succeeded by the now Right Reverend Monsignor Eugene F. Marshall. The latter was no stranger to Pittsfield, having served for fifteen years as assistant to Father Bernard S. Conaty at St. Joseph's.

Though he found the parish deeply in debt, Father Marshall pushed ahead with plans to complete the new St. Mary's on Tyler Street, one of the more beautiful churches in the city. It was dedicated in 1943 by Bishop Thomas M. O'Leary of Springfield. The first floor of the old church-school building was remodeled to provide classrooms for four more grades.

In 1954, St. Mary's completed a new \$130,000 rectory next to the church on Tyler Street. A two-storied brick structure, it was designed by Wendell Phillips of Milford. The old rectory at the corner of Tyler and Plunkett streets was torn down and replaced in 1955 with a new convent for teaching nuns. The two-storied brick building matches the style of the new rectory and accommodates twelve nuns.



### *Sacred Heart*

Sacred Heart Church was established on December 18, 1919, with the Reverend George W. Welch, assistant at St. Joseph's, as the first pastor. The congregation met in a large house at the corner of Elm Street and Meadow Lane. All partitions on the lower floor were removed to provide room for what was known as the Chapel. The upper floor was used as a rectory. By 1923, the parish had some 800 members, was free of debt, and began a drive to collect funds to build a new church.

Father Welch died in 1931 and was succeeded by the Reverend Patrick F. Dowd. Born in Ireland and educated at Holy Cross, he had been an assistant at St. Charles' for nine years and pastor at St. Patrick's in Hinsdale for two. Under Father Dowd, the parish built a new church and rectory. Spanish mission in design, built of rose-colored stucco with cast-stone trimmings and a Spanish tile roof, the church seats 700 and was dedicated with impressive ceremony in 1933.

In 1946, upon his transfer to St. Mary's at Westfield, Father Dowd was succeeded by the Reverend John P. Donahue, who had been ministering to the Sacred Heart Church in Hopedale. His successor was the present pastor, the Reverend Henry M. Burke, a graduate of Holy Cross and of the Grand Seminary in Montreal. Before coming to Pittsfield, he had been pastor at St. Patrick's in Monson.

On Christmas Day, 1954, the church celebrated its 35th anniversary with a High Mass and special music by the men's choir, the program being broadcast over local Station WBEC.

### *St. Teresa's*

Another Catholic parish, St. Teresa's, was established in 1926, with the Reverend William J. Foran as pastor. Previously, the Catholic diocese had bought for \$30,000 the Redfield house and estate on lower South Street, opposite Memorial Park. Built about 1860 by Dr. Timothy Childs 2nd, the house was transformed into a chapel and rectory. Here the congregation worshipped for almost thirty years.

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The first mass in the chapel, which seated 300 or more, was celebrated on September 6, 1926, by the Right Reverend Monsignor Bernard S. Conaty of St. Joseph's, who gave St. Teresa's an altar dedicated to the memory of his brother, the Most Reverend Thomas L. Conaty, who had been Bishop of Monterey and Los Angeles in California.

Father Foran was succeeded as pastor by the Reverend James P. Lynes in 1931, by which time St. Teresa's had more than 1,000 parishioners. Upon Father Lynes' death in 1948, he was succeeded by the present pastor, the Reverend P. Henry Sullivan.

As post-war problems eased, a drive for a new church began in 1949, energetically led by Father Sullivan. He reported that there was almost \$100,000 in the parish treasury, but that far more than that would be required to start a contemplated building program estimated to cost \$400,000. A "Vigil Brick" project was organized to provide an opportunity for friends outside the parish and throughout the country to contribute to the building of the new church—a project that brought in \$7,655 of contributions from people in every state of the Union. A fund was also started to erect an altar in memory of Father Lynes, who had labored so long and so well in the parish.

As the campaign for funds progressed, plans for the new parish buildings took shape. It was decided to build on the lower South Street site. The old chapel-rectory would be torn down and the ground levelled for a new church to seat 500 to 600 people, and an adjoining rectory. A recreation hall at the rear of the church was also planned. Designs were drawn by a well-known church architect, Wendell Phillips. Ground was broken in March 1953.

The first mass in the handsome new brick church, simple and modern in line, was celebrated on Trinity Sunday, June 13, 1954. The structure was dedicated on the Feast of St. Teresa on October 3, 1954, by Bishop Christopher J. Weldon of the Springfield Diocese.



### *Holy Family*

Holy Family Church had its origin in the growing number of people from Poland who came to Pittsfield in the early 1900s to make it their new home. They first worshipped at St. Charles'. Soon they requested, and it was arranged, that a Polish-speaking priest come to preach and to teach them twice a year—Christmas and Easter. Then a committee was formed to appeal to Bishop Beaven of the Springfield Diocese to send a Polish-speaking priest to reside in Pittsfield. The request was granted, the Reverend Victor H. Zarek being named to the post.

In 1913, Father Zarek bought property on Linden Street, which became the home of the Immaculate Conception congregation, as it was first known. Leaving to join the Polish army fighting in France during World War I, Father Zarek was succeeded by the Reverend Wacław Mieleniewski, who remained until 1921, when the Reverend Joseph Stanczyk became pastor.

Realizing that the Linden Street church was inadequate and there was no room for expansion there, Father Stanczyk arranged to buy on Seymour Street the abandoned powerhouse of the Berkshire Street Railway, with a boiler house attached and a large tract of land around the buildings. Under the direction of architect George E. Haynes, the buildings were remodeled to provide a church, a parish house, and an auditorium, and were dedicated as Holy Family Church late in 1921 by Bishop O'Leary of the Springfield diocese. The cost of the buildings and land, and of the remodeling, exceeded \$70,000, which left the parish deeply in debt.

Father Stanczyk was succeeded in 1929 by the Reverend Valentine S. Teclaw, who ministered to the parish for more than twenty-five years. Two classrooms were added in 1934. Three new murals in the church were painted in 1938.

Then came World War II. The first Pittsfield fatality in the conflict was a member of the congregation, Roman W. Sadlowski, who was killed in the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The first Pittsfield woman to die in service also belonged to the congregation—Regina T. Barszcz, a WAC. Many of Holy Family served in the armed forces, and a number lost their lives. To

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commemorate them, the parish built beside the church in 1945 a Blessed Virgin Grotto.

Chimes were installed in the church in 1950. The next year, with rejoicing and great relief, the parish burned the last of its mortgages. In April 1955, after a long illness, Father Teclaw died and was succeeded by the Reverend Ladislaus A. Rys. Father Rys soon bought a house that will be converted to serve as a convent for Felician nuns and eventually as a parochial school in which, besides the usual subjects, the Polish language will be taught.

### *St. John's*

Forwarded by a small committee appointed in 1916 and acting for a congregation of some forty members, St. John's Ukrainian Catholic Church was built on Greylock Terrace and dedicated in 1921. Ukrainians had first started settling in the city in 1904. Unlike people of other nationalities arriving at this time, they found no fellow-countrymen in a position to give them a helping hand. They had largely to make their own way.

Composed of working people, mostly employed in the local textile mills and the GE plant, the St. John's congregation held weekly services for many years under "commuting" pastors brought in from Ukrainian parishes in Cohoes, Watervliet, Hudson, and other communities close by in New York state.

In 1944, a rectory was bought on Watson Street, near the church, and in 1945 the parish had its first resident pastor, the Reverend Michael J. Skorodinsky, who was succeeded by the Reverend Antonin Ulanitsky.

Various benefit and cultural societies have been organized by the parish, which has employed the choir and the stage to cement the bond between the Old Country and the adopted land of its members. The church's choir and dance groups have often appeared locally in presenting traditional Ukrainian songs and folk dances. Most of the Ukrainian-born in the congregation have become American citizens. More than seventy of the younger men and women in the parish served in the armed



forces during World War II. In 1955, about sixty Ukrainian families were members of St. John's under the pastorate of the Reverend Elias Hawrylyshyn.

### *Jewish*

#### *Anshe Amonim*

The oldest Jewish congregation is Temple Anshe Amonim, organized in 1869 as the Society Anshe Amonim ("Men of Faith"). Among the founders of what soon developed into a Jewish reformed congregation were Joseph R. Newman and two brothers, Moses and Louis England, who were joined by the heads of about twenty families, largely from Germany.

The congregation met for many years in the homes of its members and then in rented quarters. It occupied rooms in the Melville building on North Street from 1900 to 1922, when it moved to the former Pythian Hall in the City Savings Bank building. In 1926, the congregation purchased the Advent Church at the corner of Fenn and Willis streets, reconstructed it, and dedicated it as Temple Anshe Amonim early in 1927.

The dedicatory sermon was preached by Rabbi Stephen S. Wise. He conducted the initial service with the congregation's first resident rabbi, Harry Kaplan, who remained until 1935 when he joined the Hillel Foundation at Ohio State University. His successor was Rabbi Saul Habas, who resigned in 1943.

After a series of short rabbinates, Rabbi Solomon E. Cherniak came to the Temple in 1947 and led special services as the congregation celebrated its 80th anniversary in 1949. A \$50,000 addition including religious school classrooms, a social hall and a library was built in 1951, during the pastorate of Rabbi Perry E. Nussbaum. The present congregation consists of 160 families, with Rabbi Harold I. Salzmänn as its leader.

#### *Knesses Israel*

Congregation Knesses Israel ("Gathering of Israel") is the largest Jewish congregation in the city, having more than 300 members. Formally organized in 1893, the congregation built and dedicated a synagogue on Linden Street in 1906, the

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first such building constructed in Pittsfield. Many Christian friends in the city and surrounding towns contributed to the project. The mortgage was paid off and ceremoniously burned in 1935.

At this time, the congregation was orthodox and was served by an orthodox Rabbi, Morris Fuhrman. In 1949, Knesses Israel voted to affiliate with the conservative movement, associating itself with the United Synagogue of America and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. The congregation's first conservative rabbi was a young seminary graduate, Nathan H. Reisner, who assumed office in 1949, remaining until 1952, when he was succeeded by Rabbi Jacob Freedman.

Under Rabbis Reisner and Freedman, many new members joined the congregation. The Sisterhood, organized in 1949, became increasingly active. The Men's Club was reorganized with more than forty new members. A Senior League for young unmarried men and women was established, as well as an adult choir of mixed voices. The Children's Congregation continued to meet on Saturday mornings and holidays under the direction of Jacob H. Pecker and Izak Herman.

Permission was received to rent the main auditorium of the Jewish Community House on East Street for Friday night, Sabbath (Saturday morning), Festival, and High Holyday services, though the Festival and regular Sabbath services continued to be held at the old Linden Street synagogue for a time.

Knesses Israel celebrated its 60th anniversary in 1953. In 1954, the congregation bought the Unitarian Church building on Wendell Avenue, just off East Street, and began converting it into a synagogue. Almost 200 attended the rededication of the building late in 1954.

### *Other Religious Institutions*

Other congregations and religious institutions in the city include Ahavath Sholom ("Love of Peace," Jewish orthodox), Assembleia Christiana Pentecostal Church, Assembly of the Brethren, Berkshire Full Gospel Church, Calvary Bible Church, Church of the Gospel, Crusade for Christ, First English Pente-



costal Mission, Jehovah's Witnesses, Salvation Army Chapel, St. George's Greek Orthodox Church, and St. Nicholas' Russian Orthodox Church.

### *Related Activities*

#### *Council of Churches*

The urge for cooperative action among Pittsfield churches resulted in 1910 in the founding of the Federation of Churches at the suggestion of the Reverend William V. W. Davis of the First Congregational Church. Miss Phila M. Whipple was appointed as a delegate to learn what the churches of Portland, Maine, had accomplished in this regard, and her report was enthusiastic.

Miss Whipple acted as director of the Federation while it was in the process of formation and served as its secretary for many years. She continued to be the inspiration of the organization for the rest of her life. The first president was the Reverend Charles P. MacGregor of the First Baptist Church, who was succeeded by the Reverend James E. Gregg of the First Congregational Church.

The Federation gave way in 1940 to the present Pittsfield Area Council of Churches. In addition to 19 churches, the Salvation Army and the YMCA, two synagogues also cooperate in many aspects of the Council's program.

The Council aims "to promote among the religious bodies of the Pittsfield area opportunities for cooperative achievement in serving our Creator and our fellow men." Benjamin N. Bowers, a member of the First Methodist Church, was president in 1955. The Council presidency alternates between a layman and a clergyman.

The Council has departments for young people's work, ministry, women's work, men's work, and religious education. Each plans and conducts programs and activities in the interests of all the member churches and the community. Committees include finance, evangelism, radio, community worship, social action, and publicity. The Council cooperates with the Massachusetts, the National, and the World Council of Churches.

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Chief among the Council's activities is support and operation of the Christian Center at Robbins Avenue and Linden Street, Pittsfield's only settlement house.

### *Community Relations Committee*

Another agency for greater cooperation and unity among religious and racial groups has been the Community Relations Committee, organized in 1944 after Governor Leverett Saltonstall had recommended the formation of such committees throughout the state. The first local chairman was Superintendent of Schools Edward J. Russell. The committee, with members representing various religions and races, has made important progress in improving employment opportunities for all in the community.



## *Literature and the Arts*

PITTSFIELD HAS A PLACE in the history of letters, music and art. One of the great American novels, long a world classic, was written in Pittsfield more than a century ago—Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*, published in 1851. It was certainly not the placid shallow waters of the narrow Housatonic, then a clear and sparkling stream, which inspired Melville to his titanic epic on Captain Ahab's obsessive hunt across the tempestuous high seas for his arch enemy, the White Whale. Still, his genius came to flower here. Melville was as distinguished a resident as Pittsfield ever had. As will appear, a room has been dedicated to him in the public library, the Berkshire Athenaeum.

The first Melville to come to Pittsfield was Major Thomas Melville, who was in command of the Encampment on North Street during the War of 1812. Deciding to settle in Pittsfield, he bought the old Van Schaack mansion and estate on lower South Street, later known as Broadhall, now the Country Club of Pittsfield. Young Herman Melville came to visit his uncle, Major Thomas, in the 1830s and worked a summer or two on his farm. For a term in 1837, he taught at the Sikes district school.

In 1850, after his marriage, Herman Melville came with his family and established himself at the Arrowhead farm, buying this property which adjoined the Robert Melville farm. Here he produced his masterpiece, *Moby-Dick*, and wrote other works,

including *I and My Chimney* and *Piazza Tales*. Often in his writings he extolled the beauties of Pittsfield and the Berkshires, being especially fond of the views from his home of October Mountain to the east and of Greylock to the north.

During his stay, Melville became a friend of another American genius, Nathaniel Hawthorne, who was living in Lenox, at Tanglewood, near where the famous Tanglewood Music Shed now stands, the site every summer of one of the world's great philharmonic festivals. In 1863, the Melvilles left Pittsfield. "Arrowhead," their large and attractive house, still stands.

### *Berkshire Athenaeum*

One of the centers of intellectual life in the city is its public library, the Berkshire Athenaeum, incorporated in 1872. On Bank Row facing Park Square, the Athenaeum occupies the odd pseudo-Gothic stone structure built for it by the gift of \$50,000 from Thomas Allen and dedicated in 1876. At that time, it had 8,000 books on its shelves for a population of less than 12,000. In 1955, it had more than 115,000 volumes for a population of 55,000.

The building was designed to be not only a library but a museum. It served as such down to 1903 when Zenas Crane, of Dalton, built and donated to the city the Berkshire Museum on South Street. Most of the Athenaeum's art and other museum collections were moved there. But the two institutions remained closely linked until 1932. During that period, the librarian of the Athenaeum, Harlan H. Ballard, was also curator of the Museum.

In its long history, the Athenaeum has had just four librarians—Edgar G. Hubbel (1873—1888), Harlan H. Ballard (1888—1934), Francis H. Henshaw (1934—1945), and Robert G. Newman, the present librarian, who took office in 1946.

As administrator of the Athenaeum for almost a half century, Ballard steadily improved and expanded its facilities and services. In 1897, the original building was enlarged with the construction of a \$50,000 addition at the rear. In 1898, Ballard initiated publication of the *Athenaeum Quarterly*, a printed



bulletin containing book lists and annual reports. Publication continued through 1934.

One of the first librarians to act upon an obvious need, Ballard instituted a library class to train staff members, establishing a course attended by six local girls in 1899. A man of wit and humor and considerable literary skill, Ballard no doubt startled his board members in 1911 when he delivered his annual report entirely in verse, opening with these lines:

*I have the honor of presenting here  
The report of the library for the year.  
Books on hand when the year begun,  
55,391.*

Born in Athens, Ohio, a graduate of Williams College, Ballard had been principal of Lenox High School and of Lenox Academy before being called to the Athenaeum. He was a man of many interests—literature (especially the classics), science, and local history, as well as chess, amateur magic, puzzles, Masonry, and puns. (He liked to refer to the room housing bound magazines and *Poole's Index to Periodical Literature* as "the poolroom").

He organized the National Agassiz Association for Nature Study in 1875 and for years edited the Agassiz Association's department in the old *St. Nicholas Magazine*. He published many works, the best known being his verse translation of Vergil's *Aeneid*. His *Adventures of a Librarian* grew out of his Athenaeum experience.

During his regime, the library collected more than 8,000 books, pamphlets, and manuscripts on New England history and genealogy, especially on Pittsfield and Berkshire County. These form the basis of the Athenaeum's present Ballard Collection, which includes more than 600 Shaker items, one of the largest such collections.

Ballard had a consuming interest in "good books," and particularly in his early years was apt to be a rather strict arbiter of what was "good." As his tastes were conservative and ran toward the classic, readers were not always too happy with the choice offered them. Ballard also believed in economy. As he

put it, why buy an ordinary book published at \$5 when it could be purchased two years later "for \$3 or less."

Ballard's paternalistic attitude softened with the years. By 1916 he was ready to admit that "the average citizen, and even the average child, will make a better selection of books, if left to his own impulses and judgment, than anyone else would venture to make for him." Among the "surest guides to a judgment of what the people ought to read is a knowledge of what the people want to read and will read, and a large proportion of our purchases is the direct result of particular requests . . ."

During World War I years, the Athenaeum suffered the strains and stresses of the time. Circulation declined as many departed to join the armed forces and those at home busied themselves with war activities. The library joined in Red Cross, Liberty Loan, and other war drives. It sponsored under the auspices of the American Library Association a local drive which raised more than \$2,000 for the Soldiers' War Library Fund. It collected books and magazines for distribution among those in uniform, and arranged exhibits to forward the food conservation and victory garden programs.

Many improvements were made in the 1920s. An electric sign reading "Public Library" was placed over the main entrance. The leaky roof was repaired, and the Children's Room enlarged. With a special city appropriation of \$12,000, a second floor was added to the stack room, giving space to shelve 40,000 volumes. Additional space was secured by discarding 2,000 outworn books.

The practice was started of publishing in the *Eagle* each week a list of new books acquired, with annotations. In 1930, a fire-proof storage vault was installed in the basement. All of the basement floor was leveled and covered with cement, which provided more storage and working space.

The Great Depression stimulated use of the library. With their spending money drastically cut, people turned to study and reading. There was a marked increase in the number using the circulation, reference, and children's departments. Circulation of books reached a new high of almost 140,000 in 1931.



Vigorous to the end, Librarian Ballard died in 1934, aged 81. Respected for his learning and integrity, affectionately remembered by thousands for his friendliness, helpfulness, and kindly humor, he was a scholar and gentleman of the old school. Every day at the same time, dressed in sober fashion, with a wide-brimmed black hat shading his twinkling eyes, always with a book or two under his arm, he walked to his office in the morning, started home for lunch promptly at noon, and was back at his desk soon thereafter, obviously enjoying his meditative walks. People said they could set their clocks by his passing. His death broke another tie with an old and quiet New England way of life now unhappily vanishing.

Ballard's assistant, Miss Fanny Green Clark, who had joined the Athenaeum staff in 1914 shortly after her graduation from Wellesley, was acting librarian from Ballard's death until the appointment late in 1934 of Francis H. Henshaw as head librarian of the Athenaeum. An experienced and professionally trained librarian, a graduate of Occidental College and the Columbia University School of Library Service, Henshaw brought to the institution new points of view on wider community service.

The books in the library were completely rearranged for easier access and more efficient use. The interior of the building was renovated. Reference services were expanded. The card catalogue was modernized. These improvements were made possible in large part by funds and labor provided under the Federal Emergency Relief program, later the WPA.

Library agencies were established in schools, hospitals, and other institutions. All issues of the old *Pittsfield Sun* were put on microfilm. A film edition of *The New York Times* was acquired. The owners of *The Berkshire Evening Eagle* cooperated financially in filming the issues of that newspaper since 1906, a project which has since been kept up to date each month and is of invaluable service to all students of modern Pittsfield history. Broadcasts on the library, its books and varied services, began in 1938 over Station WBRK.

The Noble Alcove, devoted to books on American history, biography, economics, and politics, was established and endowed by funds given by Mrs. Francis Lincoln Noble in memory of her husband and of his great-great-grandfather, Captain David Noble, one of Pittsfield's first settlers. The Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Music and Art Library was established in 1939. A phonograph record lending library was donated by the Pittsfield Junior League, which also gave funds for installing a soundproof booth with furniture and a phonograph for the free use of listeners. In 1940, the Wednesday Morning Club established and endowed the Anna Laurens Dawes Memorial Alcove for Young People.

During World War II, the Athenaeum geared its activities and programs to the needs of the time. It participated in many community war activities. It undertook a Victory Book campaign. A Civilian Defense Information Center was opened in the library in cooperation with the Pittsfield Committee on Public Safety. The second floor of the building had to be closed for some time because of a shortage of fuel caused by the war. A branch library was established in the Morningside section in 1942.

Henshaw resigned from the Athenaeum in 1945 to become State Librarian of Texas, later joining the staff of the Library of Congress in Washington. His successor was the present librarian, Robert G. Newman. A graduate of Dartmouth, Harvard, and the Columbia University School of Library Service, he had been on the Athenaeum staff since 1935 though he had been on military leave of absence for four years during the war. In 1946 Miss Clark, catalogue librarian and custodian of the Harlan H. Ballard Local History Collection, was appointed also as assistant librarian of the Athenaeum.

With hostilities ended, the Athenaeum resumed normal operations and expanded its services and facilities. The old building, increasingly inadequate for the library's needs and increasingly expensive to maintain, underwent another renovation after the lifting of wartime restrictions. Modern furniture and better lighting were installed in the main reading room. Sound



motion picture equipment was acquired. The lending of motion picture films was started. The activities of the popular children's department were enlarged. In 1946, book circulation passed the 500,000 mark for the first time. In 1949, it reached almost 522,000 volumes.

"At a conservative average of \$2 a volume," remarked Librarian Newman in his report for that year, "we have thus attained for our readers a return of over \$1,000,000 on an expenditure during the year of \$15,919 for books. So high a return for so small an investment would be regarded as exceptional, to say the least, in private enterprise."

In 1953, independent libraries were established in the two new junior high schools, staffed by School Department librarians. The next year, the library in Pittsfield High School, jointly operated by the Athenaeum and the School Department since 1937, was taken over entirely by the School Department, to which the Athenaeum donated 5,700 books.

More than two hundred attended the dedication of the Herman Melville Memorial Room on the second floor of the Athenaeum in 1953. The room was planned and presented by Dr. Henry A. Murray, professor of psychology at Harvard and a Melville scholar. For his unique contributions to the project, Dr. Murray was elected an honorary trustee of the Athenaeum—the first such trustee in its history. Along with the Harvard University Library and the New York Public Library, the Athenaeum is one of the three most important repositories of Melville material in the world.

The collection includes correspondence of Melville and of several members of his family, first editions of the author's works, personal articles owned by Melville, books and miscellaneous writings by and about Melville, titles read by him, volumes on whaling, the Willis I. Milham collection of scrimshaw and whaling material, the desk at which Melville wrote *Billy Budd*, the author's passport countersigned by Nathaniel Hawthorne as consul at Liverpool, and a portrait engraving of Hawthorne which the latter's wife gave to Melville.

Besides Dr. Murray, other principal donors of Melville books and memorabilia have been Mrs. Henry K. Metcalf of Cambridge, the author's granddaughter, and the Misses Agnes Morewood of Pittsfield, Helen Gansevoort Morewood of New York, and Margaret T. Morewood of Santa Barbara, California—all great-nieces of Melville. Other important contributors have been Mrs. Walter B. Binnian of Cohasset and Mrs. Abeel D. Osborne of Edgartown, granddaughters, and Mrs. Russell A. Hibbs of New York, a former owner of Melville's Pittsfield residence, "Arrowhead."

Since 1938, when the organization was formed, the Friends of the Berkshire Athenaeum have been a strong adjunct of the library. In 1947 they raised \$3,200 by popular subscription to buy a bookmobile as a memorial to Mrs. Frances Crane Colt, a generous patron of the Athenaeum. Providing library service to outlying parts of the city, the bookmobile aroused widespread interest, for traveling libraries were still unfamiliar in many sections of the country.

Now having more than 400 members, the Friends sponsor an annual library Open House, operate a profitable outdoor summer bookstall for the sale of old volumes, publish the quarterly *Book Mark*, underwrite the expense of recorded book reviews for radio broadcasts, and frequently assist the Athenaeum by purchasing equipment for which the budget does not provide.

Dr. Henry Colt, who had been president of the Board of Trustees since 1914, died late in 1931. His successor was Joseph E. Peirson, who served till his death in 1937. The next president was James M. Rosenthal, who headed the board through 1943. He was succeeded by Mrs. Lawrence K. Miller, who has since held office. Other current officers are Dr. Modestino Crisciello, vice president; Superior Court Justice Francis J. Quirico, clerk; and Paul K. Fodder, treasurer.

#### *Berkshire Law Library Association*

Another library of great service to Pittsfield and surrounding communities is the Berkshire Law Library. It dates back to



1842 when the state legislature authorized the formation of county law library associations. As a consequence, the "Counsellors and Attorneys at Law" of Berkshire County met in the courthouse, then at Lenox, where they chose a clerk, a "Treasurer & Librarian," and a committee to draft by-laws. On June 30, 1842, the proposed by-laws were adopted and were approved the next day by the presiding judge of the Court of Common Pleas, now the Superior Court.

Since that time, the Berkshire Law Library Association, one of the best of its kind in Western Massachusetts, has continuously functioned. It is a corporation, but money for the support of the library is appropriated by the legislature and raised by taxation. Books and other legal publications in the library are owned not by the corporation, but by the county. Subject to provisions in the by-laws, any inhabitant of Berkshire County may use this library, situated on the third floor of the courthouse.

In 1932, the library introduced the National Reporter system, which has proved a great time-saver for busy lawyers and a welcome space-saver for overcrowded shelves. This development was brought about by the then president of the Association, Milton Burrage Warner, who continued a lively interest in improving the library down to his death at the age of 93 in June 1954.

In recent years, the number of volumes in the library has steadily increased. There are now on the shelves some 25,000 volumes, including 2,500 volumes of Canadian and British laws and reports. At the end of 1955, the officers of the Association were James M. Rosenthal, president; Irving H. Gamwell, clerk; Frederick M. Myers, treasurer and librarian; and Justice Francis J. Quirico, Maurice B. Rosenfield, and Paul A. Tamburello as members of the executive committee. All officers serve without pay. The only salaried post is that of assistant librarian, presently occupied by Ulrich Gay.

#### *William Stanley Library*

The best technical library in the area is the Stanley Library, an integral part of the local General Electric plant. Collections

of technical literature had been built up previously but were greatly enriched in 1921 when Mrs. William Stanley, widow of the inventor of the transformer and founder of the plant, donated all of her husband's extensive technical library to form the nucleus of the Stanley Library, as it was then named. The library subscribes to hundreds of technical and scholarly journals on electricity and related fields. Samuel Sass is librarian.

### *Berkshire Museum*

Another institution in which Pittsfield takes pride and pleasure is the Berkshire Museum, earlier known as the Berkshire Museum of Natural History and Art. Organizationally, its history has been somewhat complicated. As stated before, the Berkshire Athenaeum was originally both a library and a museum. It continued as such down to 1903 when its art and other collections were removed to the handsome new two-storied Museum built just around the corner on South Street.

The gift of Zenas Crane of Dalton, the original structure consisted of a north and a south wing joined by a corridor on the ground floor, with a room above it on the second floor. Another wing at the south end of the building was completed in 1905; an addition at the north, in 1910; an addition to the east of the south wing, in 1914; and an addition to the east of the north wing, in 1915. With this new construction, the building became a rectangle with a center court.

The Athenaeum and the Museum remained closely linked for almost thirty years. Harlan H. Ballard directed both down to 1931, when a joint meeting of the trustees of the two institutions decided that they could operate more efficiently if separated, which was done. During the preceding years, the Museum was in charge of Miss Annie F. Crossman, the assistant curator. The staff was small. Excluding three custodial employees, it consisted of Miss Crossman and Miss Frances E. Palmer, who was in charge, as she still is, of the children's department started in 1921 through the interest of Mrs. W. Murray Crane.

With the separation of the two institutions, Miss Laura M. Bragg, a pioneer in museum educational work, was named



director of the Berkshire Museum. As art curator, she brought in Stuart C. Henry, a graduate of Harvard College and its museum courses; as curator of science, Bartlett Hendricks. These men, together with Ernest Ludhe, now director of the Stamford (Connecticut) Museum of Natural History, planned and performed the actual physical work of completely renovating the Museum's collections, including those in the Bird Room, the Mineral Room, the Biology Room, and the Hall of Man. They installed a new "Animals in Berkshire County" Room.

The art department was completely changed. Many paintings were removed from permanent exhibit. The finest examples of the various schools were placed in chronological order. Then the staff arranged new rooms—an Egyptian, a Greek and Roman, a Renaissance to the 18th Century gallery, and galleries of Hudson River paintings and of early American portraits, together with a gallery for modern pictures.

In 1935, Mrs. Frances Crane Colt and Z. Marshall Crane decided to honor their mother's memory by a gift that would make Pittsfield's museum one of the finest small city museums in the country. Construction provided the Ellen Crane Memorial Room, a very large central gallery with provision for almost instantaneous changes of exhibitions, and an attractive new auditorium suitable for plays, motion pictures, music, and lectures. These two large rooms occupied space where the open central courtyard had been.

Upon Miss Bragg's resignation in 1939, Stuart C. Henry became director, a post he still holds. Under him, the Museum has steadily built up its collections and widened its services. The present building contains eight art galleries, eight science galleries, an auditorium, a children's room, a traveling school exhibit room, art class rooms and a library in which there is a Carnegie reference art set.

The art department presents sculpture, painting, and objects from Egyptian times to modern, including works by Rubens, Van Dyck, Reynolds, Raeburn, Stuart, and many of the Hudson River group. The science department exhibits birds and an-

imals in realistic settings. There is a Hall of Man, with Indian and Eskimo exhibits.

In the Berkshire County historical collection can be seen what is said to be the original "Wonderful One-Hoss Shay" made famous by the poem of Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, a frequent summer resident of Pittsfield a century ago. If the visitor expects to see the old shay in the last degree of decrepitude, he will be disappointed, for the vehicle is spick and span, and apparently able to go many more miles.

As early as 1934 motion pictures were used in conjunction with the Museum's programs. Increasing use has been made of them since the construction of the Museum Theatre. Admission was charged for the programs offered the public. In 1949, with the inauguration of the Museum's Little Cinema, this was established as a separate business undertaking, with Charles Bick as manager. In 1951, this project was taken over by the Museum itself, with Bartlett Hendricks as manager. In 1954, the Cinema, with the help of the Museum, purchased heavy-duty projectors, and the Museum staff installed a large portable motion picture screen the full width of the stage, so arranged that the stage could be cleared for other uses.

In 1953, the Berkshire County Historical Room was opened after being completely renovated by the staff, a four-year project. Among important additions to this room is an original Stanley transformer, given in 1953 by the Pittsfield works of the General Electric Company.

In 1954, a new intimate Print Gallery, designed by Director Henry, was built in one of the large upper areas, formerly a class room. The actual construction was performed by the Museum staff. In 1955, a completely new design for the Old Masters' Room was undertaken to eliminate harsh reflections of light on the glass-fronted pictures—a project also designed by Director Henry and executed by the staff.

A major project under way in 1955 is the establishment of a unique "Animals of the World in Miniature" Room. The animals will be presented in models scaled to one-tenth of their



size. The models and dioramas are being done by Louis Paul Jonas of New York.

The major holdings of the Museum's collections were gifts of Zenas Crane. This nucleus was expanded by donations from Mr. and Mrs. William F. Milton, Mr. and Mrs. Cortlandt Field Bishop, Daniel Clark, Arthur N. Cooley, and many others. In recent years, the Museum has been greatly indebted to Mrs. W. Murray Crane, Miss Mabel Choate, and Mrs. Albert Spalding for additional collections, and for gifts of money for special purposes.

The Museum receives no funds from city, county, or state. It is supported by its endowment, generous gifts from its many friends, and its more than 800 annual members.

Since its founding, the Museum has become an increasingly stimulating influence in the cultural and intellectual life not only of Pittsfield but of all the Berkshires. It is visited by approximately 100,000 people a year from all parts of the country. The institution sponsors a summer art school. Monthly, it holds special exhibitions of local and national interest, including contemporary American one-man shows. Its traveling exhibitions are circulated in the schools of Berkshire County.

Among well known Pittsfield and Berkshire County artists who have exhibited often or have had one-man shows at the Berkshire Museum have been Alexander Calder, Francis Day, Albert Sterner, Thomas Curtin, Martin E. Hoy, George H. Denison, Rosetta G. Newman, Robert T. Francis, Elizabeth H. Lloyd, David L. Strout, Stuart C. Henry, Robert Hamilton, Leo Blake, Henry M. Seaver, Marian Parsons, Joseph Jenny, and Rose L. Eisner. Sculpture by Margaret French Cresson has also been exhibited frequently.

Of the Museum's present Board of Trustees of thirteen members, Gardner S. Morse is president; Mrs. Winthrop M. Crane III, vice president; Zenas C. Colt, treasurer; and Mrs. Lawrence K. Miller, secretary. Nine staff members serve under Director Henry.

The Museum is used on occasion for the meetings and activities of such diverse groups as the Red Cross Blood Donor

service, garden clubs, photography classes, General Electric seminars, Salvation Army regional conferences, theatrical groups, dance recitals, concerts, and lectures in many fields.

The Berkshire Museum Camera Club had in 1955 the largest membership in its history. In the summer of 1937, *The Berkshire Evening Eagle* participated in a national snapshot contest sponsored by Eastman Kodak. As a result of the interest created, a meeting was called at the Berkshire Museum by Bartlett Hendricks, Museum science curator. A large crowd attended and a club was founded. The late Arthur Palme, a General Electric engineer, was until his death an influential member. He was nationally known for his pictures and his articles on photographic subjects.

One of the club's first activities was the ambitious one of running a national salon, open to the leading pictorial photographers. Although no member had had any experience in conducting a major photographic exhibition, in July 1938 a jury of nationally known experts selected 103 prints from over 400 submitted. The *Eagle* devoted two pages to the display, and the salon did much toward showing Berkshire people the finest in modern pictorial photography. The club has since held two national and two international exhibitions, as well as one invitation and an international color slide exhibition.

Among Berkshire people who started with the club as amateurs and have become professionally successful are William Whitaker, now with Ansco; and Sydney R. Kanter, William F. Plouffe, and Eugene Mitchell, Pittsfield professionals.

### *South Mountain Chamber Music Festival*

One of the great events in the world of music, long a highlight of Pittsfield's summer season, is the annual South Mountain Chamber Music Festival, which attracts musicians, composers, and music lovers from all over the country and from abroad. The first concert at South Mountain, off lower South Street, was given in 1918. It was inspired, arranged, and financially supported by Mrs. Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, who erected on South Mountain a Temple of Music, a simple and



attractive building suitable for the intimacy of chamber music concerts, and cottages for use of the players.

A generous benefactor of the community in many ways, Mrs. Coolidge came to Pittsfield the long way round and quite by circumstance. She stayed on because she loved it. Born in Chicago of a wealthy merchant family, Elizabeth Penn Sprague early interested herself in music. She became a distinguished pianist, playing solos with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Theodore Thomas, one of the founding fathers of American music. She was a composer as well, and later in life was most generous and understanding in furthering the careers of young composers and players.

In 1893, she married a brilliant physician, Dr. Frederick Shurtleff Coolidge. When he contracted tuberculosis, the Coolidges moved to Saranac Lake in 1898. Ten years later, Dr. Coolidge was well enough to resume practice, provided he found a suitable climate.

At that time it was believed that high dry mountain air best suited the tubercular, so the Coolidges came to Pittsfield in 1908, buying a large estate on West Street overlooking Lake Onota. Dr. Coolidge interested himself particularly in pediatric work at the Pittsfield General Hospital, or the House of Mercy as it was named at the time.

Then came tragedy. Within little more than a year, Mrs. Coolidge lost her husband, and both her parents. Left with a substantial fortune, she began fostering the performance of old music and the creation of new. In 1916, she organized the Berkshire String Quartet, which played with her, and for her and her guests, at her West Street estate, which she soon donated to become the present School for Crippled Children.

Out of her interest in the Berkshire String Quartet grew the South Mountain Chamber Music Festival. The first concert on September 16, 1918, was attended by more than 400 persons, many of them celebrated in the world of music. The Berkshire String Quartet presented a Beethoven work. The second number was a quartet in E Minor by Alois Rieser, whose score, out of eighty-two submitted, was chosen by a distinguished jury to be

awarded the \$1,000 prize offered by Mrs. Coolidge for the best original composition for string quartet. The first concert ended with a work for piano and strings, with Mrs. Coolidge at the piano.

Very well received by the audience and the critics, the chamber music festival was held annually at South Mountain until 1924, when Mrs. Coolidge embarked upon a more ambitious venture. She gave the Federal government an initial sum of \$94,000 for the erection of an auditorium in Washington for the performance of chamber music, regarding this as the best method "to nationalize the art."

Out of this grew the superb Coolidge Auditorium adjoining the Library of Congress in Washington. A special act of Congress had to be passed to enable the government to accept the unprecedented gift. The Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation was established with a trust fund of more than \$500,000. It presented its first three-day festival of chamber music at the Library in 1925. The concerts at Coolidge Auditorium have since become famous.

The Coolidge Foundation also sponsors an active extension program of concerts from coast to coast. In 1954, it sponsored nine concerts at the Library and twenty-nine across the country, principally in the universities.

But with all her interest in making the country more aware of the art and beauty of chamber music, Mrs. Coolidge did not forget Pittsfield. In 1934, in the depths of the Depression, she decided that there should be a "home-coming" to South Mountain. The resumed chamber music festival on South Mountain was most successful, and it has since been presented almost every summer, to growing popularity and acclaim.

In 1954, under the joint sponsorship of the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation and the Fromm Music Foundation of Chicago, South Mountain presented a series of six Saturday afternoon concerts. In addition, three concerts were offered by Albert Sprague Coolidge, a professor at Harvard, in memory of his mother, Mrs. Coolidge, who had died in 1953 at the age of 89, interested in music and good causes to the last.



For a month after her death, the corridor leading to the Coolidge Auditorium at the Library of Congress had an impressive display of Coolidge exhibits—decorations from foreign governments and musical organizations, letters from contemporary composers and players, photographs of musical occasions in which she had participated, autographs of musical works which she commissioned, and other memorabilia—all a fine tribute to a great patroness of music and a splendid musician herself, one of Pittsfield's really noted citizens since its founding almost two centuries ago.

In 1935, to relieve Mrs. Coolidge of the financial and other obligations that she had previously assumed, the South Mountain Association was formed as a non-profit educational institution. It has no endowment, being maintained by gifts and memberships.

### *Berkshire Symphonic Festival*

A word should certainly be said here about another famed musical institution that is not strictly Pittsfield's—the great Tanglewood festival of symphonic music that is held every summer at Lenox only a few miles to the south.

It was first held in 1934 on the Dan Hanna farm in Stockbridge, where three concerts were given by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of Henry Hadley. In 1936, the festival was moved to the estate in Lenox of Mrs. Margaret Emerson, where Serge Koussevitzky led the Boston Symphony in three concerts.

The concert hall was a large tent covering a half acre or more. A summer squall all but brought down the tent upon players and audience, and made plain the need for better quarters. The \$100,000 Tanglewood music shed, financed by public subscription and now renowned around the world, was erected and dedicated in 1938.

Growing in fame and popularity, the Berkshire Symphonic Festival at Tanglewood was conducted under the direction of Serge Koussevitzky until his death in 1951, when Charles Munch, director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, succeeded

him. In 1954, on the twentieth anniversary of its founding, Tanglewood undertook an experiment, extending its season from three to six weeks. It was such a success, attracting more than 135,000 listeners, that a six weeks' season was held again in 1955, with attendance even higher.

In addition to the joy that Pittsfield derives from Tanglewood's fine music, the city feels a sort of semi-proprietary interest in Tanglewood, for many of the tens of thousands attending the concerts each summer either stay or stop by in Pittsfield.

### *Orpheus Male Chorus*

The Orpheus Male Chorus of Pittsfield was founded in 1936 to give men who liked to sing, and those who liked to hear them sing, an opportunity to do so. The first concert was given in the High School auditorium at the House of Mercy graduation exercises when sixteen voices under the direction of James C. Morton sang "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" and "Steal Away."

The group rehearsed weekly at the First Congregational Church and gave concerts throughout the Berkshires, and over local radio Station WBRK and WGY of Schenectady. To remove any suggestion that membership was limited by religious affiliation, the place of rehearsal was soon moved to the music room in the High School, later to the Berkshire Museum, where it has since remained.

Resigning as director in 1939, Morton was succeeded by Hans Vigeland, organist and choir director of the Congregational Church in Great Barrington. When the latter entered the armed services early in 1941, his place was taken by Robert A. Leslie of Chatham, New York, a General Electric employee who had had much previous experience in directing church choirs. Robert R. Clearwater, radio engineer at station WBRK, became the Orpheus' fourth conductor in the fall of 1943.

At this time, largely because of difficulties posed by World War II, a meeting was held at the Morningside Baptist Church to consider whether or not the chorus should disband. After



much discussion, the feeling of the majority was well expressed by the Reverend John H. Evans, assistant pastor at St. Stephen's:

"I am new here and can do little to make this chorus a success. But it seems to me that especially now, in time of war and the stress of hard times, is not the time for men to stop singing."

The Orpheus Chorus has been singing ever since, giving an increasing number of concerts each year in Pittsfield and neighboring communities, under the direction (1947—1951) of Morton Wayne, then supervisor of music in the city's junior high schools, and of Clarence W. Noyes, the present director, supervisor of music in the public schools of Lee and vicinity. It is continuing its tradition of "Music in the Berkshires," whether in a Halloween parade, a religious service, a civic or a United Nations program, or a grand assemblage of the Associated Male Choruses of America, which the Orpheus Chorus joined in 1950.

Pittsfield has many other smaller choral and instrumental groups in the schools, churches, service and other organizations, and some of the larger business enterprises. The Stanley Club, composed of General Electric employees, for several years sponsored a junior symphony orchestra.

#### *Pittsfield Community Concert Association*

The Pittsfield Community Concert Association has contributed much to local musical life by bringing to the city many of the world's greatest singers, instrumentalists, and symphony orchestras for performances at the High School auditorium. The series has continued annually since 1934, subscribers averaging 1,400, the capacity of the hall. Leaders in the Association have been Miss Mary A. Bristol and Jay C. Rosenfeld, respectively the secretary and president for the first eight years. Miss Bristol died in 1947.

The city's musicians especially identified with the development of community interest in music have included Ulysse A. Buhler, pianist and teacher; Charles F. Smith, supervisor of music in the public schools for many years; Carl F. Escher,

violinist; Jay C. Rosenfeld, violinist and music critic for *The Berkshire Eagle*; James C. Morton, tenor; and Anthony Reese, singer and teacher.

### *Town Players*

Organized in 1921, the Town Players of Pittsfield constitute one of the oldest continuously active Little Theatre groups in the country. The first president was the Reverend Charles R. Joy, pastor of the Unitarian Church. The first production was held in the Unitarian Church in 1922. Sets were built on Bartlett Avenue in Dr. Fred K. Chaffee's barn, which served as the first workshop. Suitable workshop space has since been a major problem with the group, which has made use of barns and garages all over town.

In 1924, the Town Players inaugurated the first one-act play festival in New England. Theatrical groups in neighboring cities, towns, and colleges were invited to participate. A plaque is presented annually to the winner of the festival. It must be won three times for permanent possession.

In 1955 the program called for the production of four three-act plays, a one-act play festival, and the maintenance of a theatre workshop for instruction and practice in all phases of play production and acting techniques.

In addition, the Town Players assist Community Fund and other drives by presenting television, radio, and stage skits. In summer, the members direct drama classes for the Parks Department, the Girls' Club, and other organizations.

Many members of the staffs of the local radio and television stations—WBRK, WMGT, and WBEC—are members of the group: Robert Burbank, Alan Vaber, Pat Turner, Theda Harubin, and others. Those of the Town Players who have gone into the professional theatre include W. P. Geary, Neil Bridges, Paul Lipson, Richard Burdick, and Joseph Gennaro.

### *Theatres*

In Pittsfield, as throughout the country, the growing popularity of motion pictures reduced interest in "legitimate" drama



as represented by the road shows and stock companies popular at the turn of the century.

In 1916, the silent screen remained something of a novelty. Keith's vaudeville acts still drew large audiences to the Union Square Theatre, and Loew's artists to the Majestic—now the Palace. These acts were presented between flickering cinema productions.

In 1923, one of the best stock companies to perform in Pittsfield, directed by actor Harry Bond, had a brief run at the Union Square, falling a victim to public preference for Mary Pickford, Charlie Chaplin, Harold Lloyd, and their Hollywood contemporaries. Stock companies and traveling shows alternated with seasons of motion pictures for many years at the Colonial, which, opening in 1903, closed as a theatre in 1951.

In 1955, the city had five movie houses—the Capitol, Palace, State, Tyler, and Union Square—four of them mid-town units presenting first-run pictures. There was also the Berkshire Museum's "Little Cinema," and a drive-in theatre far out on West Housatonic Street. No "legitimate" theatre has survived.

Only one of Pittsfield's old-time managers remains in active business. He is John M. Cooney, of the Union Square, who took over from his father, John F. Cooney, in 1915. Starting as an Academy of Music usher at the age of ten, Cooney has watched the changing tastes of local theatre-goers for over a half century. He vividly recalls the advent of motion pictures at the Colonial, with a home-town orchestra in the pit led by Carl F. Escher, and the surprising fiasco when Victor Herbert and his costly 60-piece orchestra failed to draw a crowd at the Union Square.

The want of local "live" productions is partly supplied during the summer by offerings of the so-called "straw-hat circuit." Competent stock companies, featuring visiting stars supported by ambitious younger actors, play to good-sized audiences, which include many from Pittsfield, at the Berkshire Playhouse in Stockbridge and at other nearby summer theatres. Ted Shawn's dancers at Jacob's Pillow in Becket are also popular during the vacation season.

*Discussion Groups*

Several organizations to stimulate public discussion and increase a knowledge of world affairs have been notably successful. Established in 1935 with the Reverend Charles R. Prewitt of the First Methodist Church as chairman, the Community Forum brought nationally known lecturers to the city each year until 1943, when activities were suspended. Meeting at the High School auditorium, the Community Forum had an open question period after each talk, and many of its 1,400 subscribing members asked questions with gusto.

Started in 1949 largely through the efforts of Konstantin K. Paluev, a research engineer at General Electric, the Workshop for World Understanding has stimulated broader knowledge of local, national, and international problems on a non-partisan basis. Conceived as a court of public opinion, the Workshop encourages the presentation of opposing ideas for free and open debate.

Similar discussion groups are frequently sponsored by the League of Women Voters and other organizations. Seminars on "Great Books," begun at the Berkshire Athenaeum by Stringfellow Barr and Scott Buchanan in 1947, now held at the Berkshire Museum, have also had an active following.

For a city of its size, Pittsfield offers unusual opportunities and stimulation for those interested in the arts and the life of the mind.



## *Business and Industry*

PITTSFIELD—OR PONTOOSUC PLANTATION, as it was first known—was born two centuries ago as a small isolated mountain hamlet in which each family was necessarily dependent upon the produce of its own farm acres for its livelihood. By 1800, the farms were producing a surplus, which was sold and shipped to outside markets, chiefly west to Albany, Hudson, and other ports on the Hudson River because transportation over the mountains that way was easier. Pittsfield has always been as much oriented toward New York as toward eastern Massachusetts.

In 1800, a young Englishman from Yorkshire, Arthur Scholfield, came to Pittsfield, bringing with him a knowledge of how to copy the manufacture of new English machines to speed up the production of textiles—carding and picking machines, comb plates, looms, spinning jennies, spindles, and other apparatus. He built such machines and, on the West Branch of the Housatonic, erected a small shop, the community's first industrial plant, "The Pittsfield Factory."

In 1807, Elkanah Watson settled in Pittsfield, to the community's great benefit. A successful businessman, Watson had become interested in agriculture—more especially, in breeding sheep that would give more and better wool. He brought with him to Pittsfield two Merino sheep, prized for their fine fleece—the first of their breed in New England. With Watson as

president and Arthur Scholfield as one of the trustees, the Berkshire Agricultural Society for the Promotion of Agriculture and Domestic Manufactures was organized in 1811, holding annual county fairs in Pittsfield.

Between them, Scholfield and Watson laid the foundation of Pittsfield's prosperous textile industry, especially in woolens, which was the community's strongest economic interest for almost a century. Many a familiar local name became prominent through the family's success in textiles—Pomeroy, Stearns, Barker, Russell, Peck, Tillotson, Rice, and others.

The local textile industry still carries weight. Since the turn of the century, however, the community's largest industry and chief economic support has been the Morningside plant of General Electric, which will be considered in the next chapter.

### *Sun Printing Corporation*

The oldest business institution in Pittsfield is the Sun Printing Corporation. Its antecedents go back to 1800 when the *Sun*, a weekly, was founded by "Fighting Parson" Allen's nephew, Phinehas Allen. A staunchly Democratic journal from first to last, the *Sun* ceased publication in 1906.

But the Sun Printing Corporation, organized in 1882, continued, doing job printing of every kind and description. Shortly before the *Sun* ceased publication, the concern had moved to its present quarters on Renne Avenue, occupying the basement and first floor of what had been the Stanley Electric Company building.

During World War I, Sun Printing had more orders than it could fill, having to struggle with shortages of supplies and skilled help. In 1921, the company increased its capital stock and bought the building it occupies. The concern did largely sample book and catalogue work, but added a department for mail advertising. Later, it went into magazine printing. Today, it prints such publications as *Yankee Magazine*, *Sports Age*, *Poultry Magazine*, *Park Avenue Social Review*, and issues of *Drug and Cosmetic Industry*, in addition to its job printing orders.



The recent presidents of the company have been Theodore L. Allen (1896—1918), Robert P. Easland (1918—1942), Edward Hamilton Gray (1942—1944), and Warren H. Osborn (1944—).

### *Agricultural National Bank*

Pittsfield's next oldest business institution is the Agricultural National Bank. Organized in 1818 with a capital of \$100,000, it established itself in a small wooden structure on what was then named and is still known as Bank Row, occupying the site where the Berkshire Athenaeum stands. Thomas Gold was the first president. The bank grew steadily as Pittsfield and the surrounding area developed. In assets, it has been for decades the largest bank in Berkshire County.

Having long occupied quarters in the Berkshire Life Insurance Company Building at the corner of North and West streets, the "Aggie" bank in 1909 erected a marble structure of its own on the east—up to then, the "wrong"—side of North Street. The building has since been improved and enlarged. The current president of the bank is Laurence R. Connor. What "Aggie" says is of great moment to the business and personal lives of many in the city and the county.

### *Berkshire County Savings Bank*

Pittsfield's second bank was the Berkshire County Savings, organized in 1846 with Henry Shaw of Lanesborough as its first president. The first deposit was made by David Stockbridge, for \$25. At the end of the first year, deposits totalled \$2,805, and the dividends declared on January 1, 1847, amounted to \$11.01. As of July 1, 1955, assets totalled almost \$49,550,000.

The bank originally occupied the second floor of the wooden building owned by the Agricultural Bank on Bank Row. In 1865, it moved to the southwest corner of the first floor of Town Hall, now the City Clerk's office. Three years later, it moved to the second floor of the newly completed Berkshire Life Insurance Building, remaining there until 1896 when it erected its own building at the corner of Park Square and North

Street, long a Pittsfield landmark. In 1926, it enlarged this building by constructing an addition along North Street which added a third to its capacity.

Arthur H. Rice was president of the bank from 1908 to 1928, when he was succeeded by William L. Adam. Upon the latter's mysterious disappearance in 1933, William A. Whittlesey was named president, serving until 1946 when he was made chairman of the board. Gardner S. Morse succeeded to the presidency of the bank, a post he still holds.

### *Pittsfield National Bank*

In 1853, with David Carson as president, what is now the Pittsfield National Bank was chartered with a capital of \$150,000. It opened for business in what was known as the "middle room" in the present City Hall. Moses England, founder of England Brothers department store, was one of the first depositors.

The bank moved in 1856 to its own building on South Street where the south wing of the Wendell Hotel now stands. A few years later, it sold its property at a profit and moved into the newly completed Berkshire Life Insurance Building, where it has since remained, having its main quarters on the southeast corner of the ground floor.

Before the use of vaults and burglar alarms, banks hired guards to sleep overnight on the premises to guard their treasures. One of the first guards at the Pittsfield National was Ralph B. Bardwell, who rose from the ranks to become in time chairman of the board.

In 1929, the Pittsfield National, with Charles W. Power as president, merged with the Third National (established in 1881), under the presidency of Bardwell, to become the Pittsfield-Third National Bank and Trust Company, with combined assets of \$6,640,000. Power remained as president and Bardwell became chairman of the board. By degrees, the name of the institution was changed until it again became the Pittsfield National Bank. The current president, Malcolm W. Lehman, took office in 1949, having successively been cashier and exec-



utive vice president. At the close of business in 1955, the bank had assets of \$14,583,000.

### *Berkshire Mutual Fire Insurance Company*

Other local business institutions have passed the century mark. With headquarters in Pittsfield, the Berkshire Mutual Fire Insurance Company was founded in 1835. The first policy it wrote, one for \$750, covered St. Stephen's Rectory, which was then on North Street.

Until the 1880s, the company confined its business to Berkshire County. During the next two decades, it expanded its operations over the state. Today, it does business in sixteen states, not only in fire insurance, but automobile property damage, inland marine, and casualty insurance.

From 1915 through 1954, its assets have risen from \$267,600 to \$4,744,700; its surplus, from \$102,700 to \$1,326,700; its annual premium income, from \$138,400 to \$2,742,900. Its more recent presidents have been Henry R. Peirson (1906—1928), Robert A. Barbour (1928—1938), and Karl E. Greene, the present incumbent.

In 1915, the company occupied quarters in the Agricultural Bank Building, moving to the Berkshire County Savings Bank Building in 1924. In 1931, it erected its own building at the corner of East Street and Wendell Avenue Extension.

### *Berkshire Life Insurance Company*

The Berkshire Life Insurance Company was founded in 1851 with its headquarters in Pittsfield. Its first president was George Nixon Briggs of Pittsfield, who had been elected to the House of Representatives for six terms and served seven times as governor of Massachusetts. His tenure continued until he died in a tragic accident in 1861, when he was succeeded by Thomas Fitzpatrick Plunkett.

During Plunkett's regime, the company built one of the landmarks of Pittsfield, the Berkshire Life Insurance Company building at the corner of West and North streets, completed in 1868. For decades it was the business hub of Pittsfield, hous-

ing all kinds of enterprises, including the post office, the telegraph office, the telephone exchange, the express offices, three national banks, and the offices of the gas company and of the water commissioners. Almost every businessman found occasion to visit it at least once a day, either for business or to exchange the news.

Growing slowly but steadily, Berkshire Life had nineteen agency offices in eleven states by 1916. In 1955, it had thirty-six general agencies in twenty-six states. Today, it has assets of almost \$155,000,000, has approximately \$500,000,000 of insurance in force, and is writing \$50,000,000 of new insurance every year.

The company was among the first to write juvenile insurance, to incorporate cash and non-forfeiture values in its policies, and to write disability insurance in its life policies. Berkshire Life has always been a mutual company and has paid dividends to its policyholders for more than a century.

In 1911, William Dow Wyman became president of the company, being succeeded in 1925 by Frederick Harrison Rhodes. Upon the latter's death in 1942, the presidency went to Harrison Lewis Amber, a native of Iowa, long an agent and officer of the company. In 1953, Amber became chairman of the board and W. Rankin Furey was chosen as president.

In 1952, realizing that there was no room to expand its present building, the company purchased a 23-acre plot on South Street opposite the Pittsfield Country Club for the erection of a new home office building with plenty of air, space, light, and parking facilities. In 1955, the company announced the sale of its old home office building for a price reported to be more than \$500,000. Berkshire Life planned to occupy its old quarters under lease until the new home office building should be completed. At the end of 1955, construction had not yet started.

### *E. D. Jones & Sons*

The firm of E. D. Jones & Sons, manufacturers of paper mill machinery, the second largest plant of its kind in the country, dates back to 1845 when Edward D. G. Jones estab-



lished the business in a small machine shop in nearby Lee, once the largest paper-making center in the world. In 1867, Jones moved his plant to Pittsfield to be on the railroad, establishing operations on Depot Street, where the company still has headquarters.

Jones conducted the business until 1904 when he died at the age of 80, being succeeded as president of the company by his son, Edward Archie Jones. The Pittsfield plant was gradually expanded as the company received more orders for planning paper mills and manufacturing the equipment for them, not only in this country but abroad, in China and elsewhere.

During World War I, the company turned much of its machinery to the manufacture of military "hardware." In the 1920s it expanded its national and international markets. It weathered the Great Depression of the 1930s with only a small fall in production.

With the outbreak of World War II, it turned to meeting the military needs of Britain and France. In 1942, a year after we entered the war, 85 per cent of its production was for American military needs. Among other things, it turned out propeller shafts for merchant ships, bearings for destroyer escorts and LSTs, and complicated rammers for the Navy's 16-inch guns. It later produced military materiel for the Korean War.

In 1950, the Jones company made contracts with concerns in many foreign countries for licensing the sale of its products or their manufacture in plants chosen for capacity to produce quality machines and equipment.

Among the licensees in 1955 were firms in Italy, France, West Germany, Spain, Japan, and Canada. There is scarcely a paper-making country in the world where Jones machinery is not in use. In 1955, the *Eagle* described Arnold J. Barea, the company's export manager, as the "travelingest traveling salesman" of Pittsfield. He is "on the road" nine months of the year, making his way around the world.

To provide more manufacturing, office, and storage space, the company in 1954 bought two buildings on McKay Street

and joined them to the main plant, thus considerably enlarging its facilities.

At his death in 1928, Edward Archie Jones was succeeded as president of the company by Stanley P. Benton, who was followed in 1945 by the current president, S. Harley Jones, grandson of the founder of the firm.

### *Pittsfield Coal Gas Company*

Another of the companies over a century old is the Berkshire Gas Company. It was born as the Pittsfield Coal Gas Company in 1853, when gas began to be used for lighting purposes in houses and on streets.

The advent of electric light after Edison's invention of the incandescent lamp in 1879 made the prospects of the gas industry gloomy. Happily for the industry, the use of gas for cooking had passed the experimental stage. Pittsfield's first gas stoves were installed about 1900, and subsequently gas began to be changed from a lighting to a heating fuel.

During World War I days, this transition was largely completed. The Gas Company increased its customers as gas stoves rapidly replaced coal and wood stoves. Gas mains were extended south to the towns of Lenox and Lee.

The general prosperity of the 1920s was shared by the company, which in 1923 changed its process of production from coal gas to carbureted water gas. The change was made to save labor and the expense of selling and delivering coke, a by-product of the production of coal gas.

The initiative of Manager Harry C. Crafts brought about increasing use of gas in the heating of water for domestic and other purposes. Restaurants, hotels, and bakeries installed gas for water heating and for cooking. The growing Pittsfield plant of GE found gas to be the best fuel to use for its heat-treating processes. All of this stimulated an increasing demand for the output of the Gas Company.

The full impact of the Great Depression was not felt by the company until 1931, when general unemployment and drastic cutbacks in local industry resulted in declining demands for gas.



In 1932, Cummings C. Chesney, long manager of the local plant of GE, was made executive vice president, becoming president the next year, succeeding William L. Adam, who had occupied the presidency for many years.

During the 1930s, the company worked hard to regain the business it had lost with the onset of the Depression. The introduction of the gas refrigerator helped, as did the increased use of gas for house heating. Because its rates for house heating were lower, the company added many householders to its heating customers. Gas mains were extended south to Stockbridge, and north to Lanesborough. By 1940, the company was well on its way to regaining the "load" it had lost in the early 1930s.

The World War II period brought new problems—how to get sufficient coal, coke, and oil to keep the company operating to meet increasing demands. As a public utility with established priorities, the company managed to obtain sufficient raw materials for its operations.

In 1950, rumor ran that natural gas was going to be piped from Texas to New England. The rumor proved to have substance, for in the fall of 1951 natural gas from the Southwest was piped into Pittsfield, the first New England community to have such gas.

Several utility groups began negotiating at this time for the purchase of the Pittsfield Coal Gas Company. In November 1953, an agreement was reached for the sale of the company to these groups. Robert W. McCracken, who had succeeded Cummings C. Chesney as president of the company in 1945, retired and was succeeded by the current president, Kenneth D. Knoblock. Joseph T. Kelley continued as vice president and general manager.

In 1954, the Pittsfield Coal Gas Company purchased the Berkshire Gas Company of North Adams and merged with it to become the Berkshire Gas Company with headquarters at its long-established offices at the corner of Bank Row and South Street in Pittsfield. The new company announced in 1955 an expansion program of more than a half million dollars to increase and improve its service to the Berkshires.

*Holden & Stone*

Holden & Stone Company, one of the few specialty shops in the country having over a century of continuous existence, was founded in 1844 by Henry G. Davis. The store is probably the oldest in Berkshire County. It was in Deacon Davis' store that Marshall Field, destined to become the prominent Chicago merchant, secured his first job at the age of 17.

Although the firm changed names often in the early years, it was never sold to an outsider. Each change resulted from partners succeeding each other. Consecutive firms have been H. G. Davis, H. G. Davis & Company, H. G. Davis & Wood, M. H. Wood & Company, Wood & Garlick, Sturvent & Johnson, Johnson & Bailey, G. W. Bailey & Company, and Holden & Stone Company. The president in 1955 was Edwin W. Holden, son of Harry Holden, who became a partner of George W. Bailey and Frank L. Stone in 1892.

Originally occupying the southeast corner of North and School streets, the firm moved after 41 years to the Central Block. When this building was sold to England Brothers in 1930, the store took its present quarters on the main floor of the Onota Building. Before this, Holden's had been a general department store. In its present smaller quarters it became a specialty shop, chiefly selling ready-to-wear clothing and accessories but having a domestic department.

*England Brothers*

Long the largest department store in western Massachusetts, England Brothers was preparing in 1955 for its approaching centennial, having been founded in 1857 by Moses England on the east side of North Street. It later moved across the street to the west side, where it has since remained, a landmark for many years. Two stories were added in 1926. The firm acquired the adjoining Newman building in 1931, and the store was enlarged to its present size in 1938.

The firm was incorporated in 1927 by three sons of the founder—with Benjamin M. England as president, Simon England as vice president and treasurer, and Daniel England as



secretary. Bridges to the Central Block were built in 1938, 1947, and 1956. An escalator was installed in 1949.

The average number of employees rose from 200 in 1916 to 300 in 1955. In the latter year, employment rose to more than 600 during the Christmas shopping season. A Quarter Century Club was founded among employees in 1947. The club now has 40 members, more than 10 per cent of all permanent employees. Three members have worked in the store for more than a half century.

In 1955, the officers were Benjamin M. England, son of Daniel England, president; Simon England, Jr., vice president; Daniel England, Jr., secretary; and Alan J. Blau, son-in-law of Simon England, treasurer and general manager.

### *Pittsfield Electric Company*

Pittsfield's first power for electric light was turned on in 1883 by the Pittsfield Electric Light Company. It furnished direct current for carbon arc lamps from engine-driven generators in a wood-working shop near the corner of North and Melville streets. Another company to supply incandescent lighting was organized in 1887, the Pittsfield Illuminating Company.

The two companies consolidated in 1890 as the Pittsfield Electric Company, with Alexander Kennedy as president. Purchasing land at the corner of Renne Avenue and Cottage Row, now Eagle Street, it erected there a two-storied brick building and boiler house. Exhaust steam from the boiler house engines was piped and sold to business blocks for heating during the winter. In 1904, a new power house with diesel engines was built on ground purchased between Silver Lake and the Boston and Albany railroad tracks. By 1915, the company was serving 4,500 businesses and homes, with its output steadily increasing.

During World War I, with demands for industrial power increasing, the company extended its services to Dalton and Lee through an arrangement with the Lee Electric Company. Between 1916 and 1919, the maximum load on the company's system increased 70 per cent, and its revenues doubled.

The post-war recession in the early 1920s reduced the sale of power for industrial use, but sales to householders continued to rise, though slowly. In 1922, with demands for power increasing, Pittsfield Electric made a ten-year contract with the Turners Falls Power and Electric Company to build a double-circuit transmission line of 37 miles from its plant to Pittsfield to supply the extra power needed. The boilers at the Silver Lake plant therefore became available to supply steam for the company's steam heating system through a high pressure main laid along the Boston and Albany's tracks to the heart of the city. The boiler plant on Renne Avenue was dismantled, and the building reconstructed for other purposes.

In 1923, Alexander Kennedy, president of Pittsfield Electric since its organization, died and was succeeded by William A. Whittlesey 2nd.

During the boom years in the late 1920s, a period of mergers and more mergers, several large financial combines sought to obtain control of the company. The Turners Falls Power and Electric Company, which was supplying power to the Pittsfield Electric Company, the Greenfield Electric Light Company, the United Electric Light Company of Springfield, and others in western Massachusetts, proposed an association of the companies so physically connected—a proposition that was adopted.

Three directors of Pittsfield Electric Company became trustees of the association known as the Western Massachusetts Companies—Winthrop M. Crane, Jr., Edward A. Jones, and William A. Whittlesey 2nd. The last was named as a vice president. John J. O'Connell, manager of the electric company at Amherst, was made manager of Pittsfield Electric.

Depressed business conditions in the 1930s made it necessary to reduce operating expenses without impairing service to customers. All employees and officers accepted a graduated pay reduction.

In 1933, the Lee Electric Company and the Pittsfield Electric Company, having been closely associated for 16 years, consolidated, the former company becoming the Lee Division of Pittsfield Electric.



## THE HISTORY OF PITTSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

In March 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared a Bank Holiday. With only a small amount of cash on hand, Pittsfield Electric could not meet its payroll for the first and only time. By 1938, the effects of the Depression had been relieved, and the company's business resumed its rapid growth.

The eleven operating companies that comprised Western Massachusetts Companies in 1928 had been slowly consolidated into four operating companies—Western Massachusetts Electric Company, Turners Falls Power & Electric Company, Pittsfield Electric Company, and the United Electric Light Company of Springfield. These consolidations led to increased efficiency, better service to the public, simplified accounting, and improved operation.

In 1939, the companies petitioned the Department of Public Utilities to consolidate into one operating company without change in the financial structure for the purpose of further advantages in operation, economy, and financing. Considerable opposition developed so that it was not until 1941 that the petition was granted.

As with electric service companies all over the country, World War II brought many restrictions in the use of metals, coal, and man power. The War Production Board restricted the company's efforts to increase its sales. A drastic limitation was placed upon construction of all types. Sales promotion was first affected by not permitting the sale of refrigerators; next, electric ranges; and successively, all electric appliances for the home. Companies were requested not to make line extensions of more than 250 feet unless useful for the war effort. Street light extensions were prohibited.

The year 1942 closed with a most destructive ice storm which brought down distribution lines in western Massachusetts, particularly in rural areas. No industry in war production was seriously affected by this storm, due to the company's ability to thaw out its high voltage transmission lines electrically. As the ice formed, the lines were heated by applying a controlled short circuit to various sections of the transmission network, a procedure only possible on the main double-circuit transmission

lines. With copper on the critical list and the supply limited, many substitutes for copper were used for temporary repairs—even iron wire—all of which had to be replaced later.

In 1943, the Pittsfield Electric Company became the Western Division of the Western Massachusetts Electric Company. The officers and directors of the four consolidated companies became the officers and directors of Western Massachusetts Electric. The policy of local management was maintained. Upon the death in 1944 of John J. O'Connell, manager of the Western Division for thirteen years, he was succeeded by Assistant Manager Charles S. Van Buskirk, who held the position until his retirement in 1951.

Early in 1945, the Federal government ordered that all non-essential lighting and transportation be eliminated, and that interior temperatures be kept at a maximum of 68 degrees to conserve the coal supply. This "brown-out" had a decided effect on commercial lighting, but little on the domestic business. On V-E Day, restrictions were removed. Late in 1945, Fred C. Abercrombie, president of the Western Massachusetts Companies, died and was succeeded by Howard J. Cadwell.

The demand for electric power in the post-war years grew beyond what could be economically produced with the facilities available in the Pittsfield area. Principally, there was a lack of sufficient condensing water. The needed power had to be supplied by additional steam plants on the Connecticut River, or by connection with other power systems.

In 1951, Charles S. Van Buskirk, manager of the Western Division since 1944, retired and was succeeded by William A. Whittlesey 3rd, grandson of the first manager of the Pittsfield Electric Company. William A. Whittlesey 2nd, associated with the Pittsfield Electric Company and the Western Massachusetts Electric Company for 46 years, retired as vice president of the Western Massachusetts Electric Company in 1952.

During the decade following V-J Day, the trend of the company's electric energy sales has been constantly upward at the rate of approximately 10 per cent annually. The company has



been for many years Pittsfield's largest taxpayer except for the General Electric plant, the city's major industry.

### *Eaton Paper Corporation*

One of Pittsfield's chief enterprises, now known as the Eaton Paper Corporation, produces fine stationery and writing accessories for a national and international market. The enterprise dates back to 1893 when a stationery factory was established in the city, taking over the building on South Church Street formerly occupied by the Terry Clock Company. The concern, then known as the Hurlbut Stationery Company, was directed by Arthur W. Eaton, a native of Nova Scotia, who had been for some years president of the Hurlbut Paper Manufacturing Company of South Lee, the parent company.

In 1899, both companies were taken over in the age of trusts by a large paper combine, the American Writing Paper Company. Almost simultaneously, Eaton and associates bought back the Pittsfield plant and reestablished local ownership and control, incorporating it as the Eaton-Hurlbut Paper Company. In 1907 it became the Eaton, Crane & Pike Company, with Eaton as president and treasurer, and with the paper-making Cranes of Dalton having a substantial financial interest.

The company's greatest expansion occurred during the 1920s when the number of employees, originally about forty, increased to some 1,200, which necessitated the acquisition and construction of additional buildings to provide working space. In 1928, the company resumed manufacture of its own paper, exclusive of Crane products, acquiring for the purpose the former Berkshire Hills Paper Company of Adams near by.

Then the Great Depression struck, which caused many changes, resulting in the reorganization of the company and the sale of the Adams mill. In 1932, the company decided to discontinue making into stationery the paper of the Crane mills in Dalton. At the same time, the company took its present name, the Eaton Paper Corporation, but with no change in ownership.

In 1934, Arthur W. Eaton died, being succeeded as chairman by his son, William H. Eaton. The latter was succeeded as presi-

dent by Horace W. Davis, who had been president of the Agfa Ansco Corporation of Binghamton, New York. During Davis' regime, the company acquired the business of Laura Lee Linder of New York City, manufacturers of leather accessories for writing desks, moving the plant and most of the staff to Pittsfield. The firm of Whiting & Cook, stationery manufacturers at Holyoke, was also absorbed in this period.

Upon Davis' death in 1942, George P. Clayson became president. Under him, the company took over in 1947 the business of the Nascon Products Company of New York, manufacturers of social and business record books with nation-wide distribution. The next president was Harry C. Dutton, president of the White and Wyckoff Manufacturing Company of Holyoke, who since 1949 has directed Eaton's. In 1953, Colonel William H. Eaton, successively secretary, treasurer, president, and board chairman over a period of 53 years, retired from active business but continued as chairman.

### *Crane & Company*

Though its main mills have always been in neighboring Dalton since the first was established there more than a century and a half ago, the firm now known as Crane & Company has long had an important and interesting mill in Pittsfield—since 1879, when it bought and converted the old Colt textile mill in the northeastern section of Pittsfield near the Dalton line.

Since that date, the Government Mill, as it is known, has supplied to the Federal government under annually awarded contracts all of the especially fine, strong, and distinctive paper that the Treasury uses in printing "greenbacks" and government bonds. In a real sense, every bill in the wallets of Americans, as well as every Treasury bond in their safe deposit boxes, comes either from Pittsfield or from Dalton.

From 1915 through 1955, the Government Mill shipped to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing in Washington an average of 1,500 tons of paper a year—which represents a lot of circulating currency and more or less permanent investment. For



obvious reasons, the Government Mill is under strict security control.

### *A. H. Rice and Company*

A. H. Rice's reputation is known in the thread and braid business from coast to coast. More than three quarters of a century old, the firm was organized in 1878 by S. K. Smith, W. B. Rice, and his son, A. H. Rice. The company began operations in a small wooden building about forty feet square at the corner of Linden Street and Robbins Avenue. The Smith and Rice Company, as it was first known, was reorganized in 1884, taking the name of A. H. Rice and Company. Two years later, it moved to larger quarters in a vacant woolen mill at the corner of Burbank and Spring streets, the site of today's greatly enlarged plant.

The firm first produced silk sewing thread, later adding the manufacture of silk and mohair braids, then widely used in trimming men's and women's coats and suits. In 1908, the company began to use rayon—or wood silk, as it was then called—in its braids, one of the first successful textile products made from rayon.

During World War I, the Rice company supplied the military with many essential items and continued its expansion during the 1920s. It installed a new electric power system to drive its machines in 1923. Changes in fashion and the decreasing use of braids for ordinary clothes caused the ruin of many competitors. The Rice company acquired the business of some of the bankrupts and went on prospering, promoting the industrial use of braids and threads to replace the demand that had formerly come from tailors and dressmakers.

Again in World War II, the company turned its operations in large part to supplying military needs, producing braid and thread for trimming and stitching service uniforms, nylon cord for parachute shroud lines, silk thread for stitching powder kegs, nylon thread for stitching parachute canopies and other uses. During the Korean War, Rice products were used in sev-

eral new items—in armored vests, and in deceleration chutes for jet aircraft.

Today, Rice's production of thread goes largely into the manufacture of men's suits, coats, and sports shirts, where it is used for both utilitarian and decorative purposes; into shoes for men, women, and children; into seaming of women's full-fashioned hosiery; and the stitching of automobile upholstery for some of the largest makers of fine cars.

Rice threads are also used for a wide diversity of purposes—including windings for fishing rods; stitching of awnings, baseball gloves, and lingerie; quilting of linings for overcoats; and lacing operations in the fabrication of electric and electronic equipment. The firm's products are offered in more than a hundred different colors or color combinations.

Since 1927, William T. Rice, grandson of the founder of the concern, has been president of the company. His sons, John H. and Peter Van S., are vice presidents of the firm, representing the fourth generation of the Rice family to be active in the thread and braid mill. Late in 1955, the company announced immediate construction of a \$45,000 addition to the plant to provide more space for its operations.

### *Berkshire Woolen Company*

The Berkshire Woolen Company was formed in 1910, establishing operations in what had been the Upper Mill of the J. L. & T. D. Peck Manufacturing Company. The mill was owned at the time by Ralph D. Gillett of Westfield, who became president of the new company. He was joined in the enterprise by James R. Savery, of Pittsfield; Denis T. Noonan, a woolen manufacturer in Dexter, Maine; and Wesley V. E. Terhune, a selling agent in New York City. Savery was named treasurer, while Noonan and Terhune took charge of manufacturing and selling respectively. Upon Gillett's death in 1913, his son Edgar, of Westfield, became president.

In 1915 the Berkshire Woolen & Worsted Company, as it was first known, was reorganized and took its present name. The Gillett estate received preferred stock for its interest.



Noonan, Terhune, and Savery shared the common stock and assumed active management. In 1918, after the last of the preferred stock had been retired, Noonan became president, with Terhune as vice president and Savery as treasurer. After Savery's death in 1938, Noonan also became treasurer.

To expand operations, the company acquired in 1923 the Peck mill at the corner of Peck's Road and Onota Street. A new power plant was built in 1941 to supply all of the company's power needs. In 1947, needing more manufacturing space, the company constructed a new three-storied building and provided other space by erecting additions to older buildings. To expand further and keep itself competitive in the industry, Berkshire Woolen in 1949 leased, with an option to buy, a large Air Force warehouse at Monck's Corner, South Carolina, for use as a branch plant.

In 1951, the original Savery interest in the company was purchased by G. Harry Gwinnell of Pittsfield and Denis T. Noonan, Jr. The following year, the elder Noonan became chairman of the board, Gwinnell was chosen as president, with the younger Noonan as vice president and treasurer.

Early in 1954, a major portion of the Lower Mill at the corner of Peck's Road and Onota Street was destroyed by fire. To replace this, the company erected an addition to the main plant on Peck's Road.

### *Pontoosuc Woolen Manufacturing Company*

The history of the Wyandotte Worsted Company dates back to 1930. But the history of the mill itself goes back to the year 1827 when the Pontoosuc Woolen Manufacturing Company was incorporated. The Francis family, which was to help shape its destiny, acquired an interest in it about the time of the Civil War and was closely associated with it until Pontoosuc ceased operations in 1929.

During World War I years, the Pontoosuc Company enjoyed its period of greatest prosperity, having the highest profits in its long history in 1918. The post war years of 1920—1923 brought

depressed business conditions, but the company weathered these trying years.

With the economic picture brightening, it embarked upon an expansion program. In 1925—1926, a new carding and spinning building was erected at a cost of \$350,000. In 1928, \$250,000 was spent on the construction of a new weave room. This outlay, followed by the collapse of the stock market in 1929, was more than the company could bear and marked the end of the Pontoosuc Woolen Manufacturing Company after more than a century of business.

The Francis name, so closely associated with the mill, remains before the public in the person of Kay Francis, celebrated actress and former wife of one of the mill's executives.

### *Wyandotte Worsted Company*

After the crash of 1929 and the depression that followed, a company purchasing additional facilities for manufacturing was the exception rather than the rule. Wyandotte was one of the exceptions. In 1930, Nat Barrows, Edwin W. McGowan, and John H. McGowan leased the facilities of the Pontoosuc Company from the Berkshire County Savings Bank, buying the property from the bank in 1933 for \$100,000. In a period when many woolen mills were closing or moving south, Wyandotte not only continued operations, but could point to black ink in the ledger in every one of the lean years of the 1930s. Despite depressed conditions in the textile industry, the company felt confident of better times and went ahead with a program of modernizing and renovating the Pittsfield mill.

During World War II the company produced millions of yards of army cloth and blankets for the armed forces. In 1942, the plant was organized by the Textile Workers of America, CIO. Recognition of each other's problems has led to harmonious relations between the company and the local union.

At the close of the war, the company resumed production for civilian needs, concentrating on medium-priced women's coating material with which it had had much success. The Korean conflict brought a partial conversion to army shirting cloth and



blankets. In 1951—52, a modernization program was undertaken, designed to put the company in a better position to meet southern competition. Millions were spent on the latest types of machinery, conveyors, air conditioning, and building improvement.

### *Pittsfield Co-operative Bank*

The Pittsfield Co-operative Bank was organized in 1889. One of the founders was W. Murray Crane of Dalton, soon to become governor of Massachusetts and later United States Senator. Co-operative banks in Massachusetts had first been formed in 1877 to provide an easier way for employees to finance buying of homes and to make systematic savings out of income. Having operated for years in the private office of Rollin H. Cooke, clerk and secretary of the corporation, the Pittsfield Co-operative Bank in 1906 established offices on Fenn Street. In 1932 it moved to its present location opposite the post office.

By 1918, more than 2,000 families were represented among the shareholders in the bank. Its assets, which at the end of its first year totalled \$7,500.01, had climbed to almost \$1,500,000. During the boom days of the 1920s, with much building construction in Pittsfield, the bank's assets increased to more than \$2,500,000.

Through the depression years the bank continued to grow. By October 1938, its assets totalled approximately \$3,390,000, owned by 2,756 shareholders. The latter had received during the previous decade more than \$1,000,000 in dividends, the largest for any decade in the bank's history—and this at a time when virtually no corporations were paying dividends, being chiefly worried about climbing out of the "red."

Since 1938, the shares of all co-operative banks in the Commonwealth have been insured in full under Massachusetts law, through the agency of a special fund administered by the Co-operative Central Bank of Massachusetts. This and other factors stimulated its growth and in August 1955, it reported assets of almost \$13,170,000.

Henry R. Peirson was president of the bank from 1903 to his death in 1918. His successors in office have been Arthur W. Plumb (1918—1931), John Barker (1931), Richard H. Gamwell (1931—1954), and Walter L. Gultinan (1954—).

### *City Savings Bank*

The City Savings Bank was chartered in 1893, with Francis W. Rockwell as president. It began business in part of a store in a block at North and Summer streets. In 1899, it moved to the corner of North Street and Eagle Square. It bought the building at the corner of North and Fenn streets in 1906, its present location, and two years later remodeled it to provide more convenient banking facilities. In 1930, its quarters were again improved and enlarged.

Upon his death in 1917, Rockwell was succeeded as president by Clement F. Coogan, who had been one of the corporation's trustees. Coogan died in 1942, and his successor was Clifford F. Martin, the current president, who had been successively assistant treasurer, treasurer, trustee, and vice president of the bank.

Between November 1915 and July 1955, City Savings' deposits increased from some \$3,260,000 to almost \$24,000,000; its assets, from almost \$3,400,000 to more than \$27,000,000; the number of its accounts, from 10,164 to more than 19,500.

### *Berkshire Trust Company*

The Berkshire Trust Company began life in 1895 as the Berkshire Loan and Trust Company, with Dr. Franklin K. Paddock as president. By 1916, the bank had assets of almost \$1,600,000 and capital funds of \$286,000. At the time, the institution occupied quarters in the Berkshire County Savings Bank building at the corner of North Street and Park Square. In 1923, it moved to its present quarters in the limestone building it erected at the corner of North and School streets. For the first time, a savings department was established. Six years later, the bank adopted its present name.



## THE HISTORY OF PITTSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

Charles E. Hibbard was president of the bank from 1907 until he was succeeded by his son, Charles L. Hibbard, in 1922. In this year, William A. Whittlesey 2nd became a director and in 1955 was the senior director, having served 33 years.

The Depression struck the Berkshire Trust hard, as it did banks throughout the country. With the reorganization of the board of directors, Cummings C. Chesney became president. Late in 1933, the bank joined the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation.

The following years were ones of renewed growth, reflecting improved business conditions. In 1939, Harry S. Watson was named president. During World War II, deposits continued to rise until they reached a new high of almost \$8,000,000 at the end of 1945. Everett M. Holden became president in 1950.

Three years later, banking quarters were completely renovated and rearranged. Early in 1955, an installment loan department was established to meet the growing demand for personal loans and consumer credit. When the Berkshire Trust closed its books at the end of 1955, it had \$7,260,000 of deposits, and capital funds and reserves of \$1,143,000—a ratio of net worth to deposits almost double the national average.

### *Union Federal Savings and Loan Association*

Pittsfield's youngest bank, the Union Federal Savings and Loan Association, organized in 1911 as the Union Co-operative Bank, is now in point of assets the second largest banking institution in Berkshire County. It grew out of a meeting of prominent local business leaders called together by Henry F. Ryan, an attorney and a director in two real estate firms with extensive property holdings along North Street. The founders desired to "encourage savings and to provide a flexible and modern home-financing program for residents of Pittsfield and neighboring communities."

Chartered by the state as a cooperative bank, Union Federal opened offices in the Berkshire County Savings Bank building. William H. Eaton was the first president, serving until 1917 when he was called to active duty as a captain in the Army.

## BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

His successor was Clifford Francis, who served until his death in 1927. George H. Cooper was then president for a year.

By 1923, the bank had assets of \$431,000 and had outgrown its offices in the Berkshire County Savings building, moving to the former Blatchford building on North Street. Henry Ryan continued to be the driving force behind the institution's growth down to his death in 1930.

Ryan's close friend and associate, Robert F. Stanton, became president in 1928, serving till his death in 1939. During his regime, the bank turned back its state charter and affiliated itself with the Federal Savings and Loan Association. In 1931, the bank acquired larger and permanent quarters, moving to the Edwards Block on North Street, which it purchased in 1940 and where it has since remained. The institution's name was changed to Union Federal Savings and Loan Association in 1937.

Edward N. Huntress, the association's first full-time treasurer, was chosen as president in 1939 and served until he became chairman of the board in 1947, being succeeded by J. Donald Codey, the current president.

Going farther afield, Union Federal in 1950 established a branch bank in Springfield. By 1955, the institution had more than \$35,000,000 in resources, with \$29,000,000 of this sum invested in homes.

### *Hotels and Apartment Houses*

During the past 40 years, Pittsfield's hotels have undergone marked changes resulting from the public's altered traveling habits brought about largely by the wider ownership and increasing use of family automobiles. When on vacation, Americans have become transients, seldom staying at one place.

Long a fashionable and well patronized summer hotel, the Maplewood on upper North Street, originally the Maplewood Young Ladies' Institute, was operated by Arthur W. Plumb until his death in 1931. By 1936 its faithful clientele had so declined that it closed its doors. Part of the building was razed



late that year; the remainder was made into the Maplewood Apartments.

At the corner of South and West streets, overlooking Park Square, stands the city's largest hotel, now again known as the Wendell. Built and owned by Samuel W. Bowerman, it was opened in 1898. The next year, Arthur W. Plumb and George W. Clark of the American House leased the hotel from John P. Doyle and Company, the first managers. The firm of Hamilton and Cunningham acquired the lease in 1900. After his partner's retirement, Ryland Hamilton continued to operate the Wendell until 1905 when Luke J. Minahan became manager. On the latter's death in 1913, the Wendell Hotel Company conducted the hotel until 1922, when Napoleon A. Campbell acquired control.

Among extensive changes made by Campbell were the addition of 65 rooms, a ballroom, a cafeteria, and five new shops in 1924; a solarium in 1925; and the south wing with 105 rooms in 1929. Campbell sold the hotel in 1944 to the Sheraton Hotel Corporation of Boston, owners of 17 other hotels, and it became known as the Wendell-Sheraton. The "Wendell" was dropped in 1945. In 1954, the Sherwood Hotel Corporation of New York purchased the Sheraton for more than \$1,000,000. After a brief period as the Wendell-Sherwood, the name was changed back to the Wendell, honoring Colonel Jacob Wendell, associated with the founding of Pittsfield. Having nearly 300 rooms, the hotel accommodates about 500 guests.

The New American House, built in 1899 at the corner of North Street and Columbus Avenue, was long the headquarters of commercial travelers. Local hotelmen identified with it included Arthur W. Plumb, Joseph A. McNamara, and George W. Clark. Closing in 1937, the American House was razed to make room for stores. Other long established hotels are the Allen on Wendell Avenue Extension, and the Berkshire on North Street.

The principal apartment houses are the South Street Inn and the Livingston Apartments on East Street. Numerous motels and tourist homes in the city and environs illustrate the change that has occurred in travelers' accommodations since the days

when hotels and boarding-houses offered the only transient shelter.

### *Early Newspapers*

In Pittsfield, as in most American cities, the story of journalism during the first half of the 20th century was, in part, a story of transition from several to a single local newspaper. At the start of World War I, Pittsfield had three newspapers. *The Berkshire Evening Eagle* and the *Evening Journal* were dailies and there was the *Sunday Morning Call*. Within a few years, rising production costs and the widening circulation range of metropolitan newspapers had taken their toll.

The *Call* expired in 1915. The *Journal*, Democratic in politics, became in 1916 the *Daily News*. The latter closed up shop two years later, leaving the *Eagle* as Pittsfield's only daily publication.

### *The Berkshire Evening Eagle*

In time, this development contributed to an important transition in the surviving paper. Traditionally and staunchly Republican in politics, the *Eagle* retained its loyalty to the party for some 25 years after it became a local monopoly. By the end of that period, its partisan fervor had been modified by the trend of national events, by the city's adoption of a non-partisan charter in 1932, and by its broadened obligations as the city's only editorial voice.

In 1944, it formally declared its political independence. To the consternation of its more conservative readers, it confirmed its new status by supporting that year Franklin D. Roosevelt's bid for a fourth term in the White House. In 1952, it was one of the few papers in the Northeast to support Adlai Stevenson, the Democratic nominee for president.

During this transition period, the *Eagle* grew rapidly with the city and county, both in physical size and in the scope of its editorial coverage. Its circulation, barely 14,000 at the close of World War I, rose steadily to a high of 27,600 in 1955. Its



payroll increased from 50 employees to 141, including part-time help.

The size of the paper, which rarely exceeded 10 pages daily in 1916, rose to an average of nearly 30 pages. Its price climbed from two cents to five. In 1955, some 1,754 tons of newsprint rolled through its presses.

Accompanying this growth was a steady expansion of the paper's physical plant. In 1926, its flat-iron building, erected in 1904, was extensively remodeled and enlarged. In 1950, a drastic overhaul rebuilt the structure's face, moved the overcrowded news and editorial departments upstairs to spacious quarters covering the entire second floor, and provided basement space for storing newsprint. An underground tunnel and elevators were installed for transporting newsprint to the press room.

In the same year, a six-unit Hoe press, purchased from the *Atlanta (Georgia) Journal*, was installed in a newly excavated sub-basement, providing double the printing capacity of the previous sextuple press in use since 1925.

Many changes have been made in the appearance and content of the *Eagle*. A United Press wire was added to its Associated Press service in 1937. Headline dress was changed the following year. The size of body type was increased from seven to eight-point in 1954. Wire-photo service was instituted during World War II. Teletype service to the newsroom in Pittsfield from the *Eagle's* correspondents in Great Barrington, North Adams, and Lee was established in the 1950s. Associated Press and United Press tele-typesetter service, permitting the casting of type directly from perforated tapes, was installed in 1952.

Of more direct interest to the average *Eagle* reader was a parallel growth in the thoroughness and variety of the paper's news coverage. The reporter who, in the 1920s, was of necessity a jack-of-all-beats, had become by the end of World War II something of a specialist. Covering City Hall in the morning, a baseball game in the afternoon, and a fire at night was no longer one man's work. The paper became more departmentalized, less provincial, and more polished in style and editing.

After World War II, when television began competing for readers' time and attention, there was a steady expansion in the variety of local columns and regular features. A building and real estate section was incorporated in the Saturday edition in 1936. A Saturday picture page, initiated by staff reporter-photographer William H. Tague under the title "The Eagle Eye," began in 1952. A localized weekly women's page was added the following year.

The expansion of columns of local interest began in 1940 with "Our Berkshires" department. Four days a week it featured contributions by Berkshire writers—among them, former New York drama critic and Yale University drama professor Walter Prichard Eaton of Sheffield. Weekly columns of comment on municipal problems and on local ramifications of State House and Washington political issues soon followed. "Notes and Footnotes," a daily editorial-page feature by staff member Richard V. Happel, was launched in 1949. A semi-weekly column on the entertainment field—"The Lively Arts," by Milton R. Bass—followed in 1952. By 1955, the paper had some 20 columnists of its own, either staff members or outside contributors.

Meanwhile, many critics—mostly staffers doubling in brass—passed judgment in the *Eagle's* pages on every significant offering of the county's rapidly expanding summer cultural events in the world of art, music, theatre, and the dance.

The most ambitious innovation came in 1954 with the establishment, under the editorship of Robert B. Kimball, of a weekly summer Saturday supplement of pictures and feature articles on Berkshire history, personalities, tourist attractions, and special events. Appealing to the interests of summer visitors as well as year-round subscribers, the supplement was expanded in 1955 under the title "Berkshire Week" and was given supplementary free distribution in hotels and tourist places, bringing its total circulation to an average of more than 35,000 copies weekly.

In addition, the *Eagle* issued during the 1915—1955 period a number of significant special editions and supplements. Perhaps the biggest of these came in 1939 in the form of a monumental



150th anniversary number, which ran to 72 pages. It was printed entirely in rotogravure, consumed 16 tons of newsprint, and included some 600 pictures.

Other notable supplements, published as a public service, included a 16-page digest of the Engelhardt report on Pittsfield's school building needs in 1949, and a 20-page digest of the Pittsfield Social Service Survey of 1954.

One type of special edition vanished entirely from the local scene during this period, however. Until the middle 1930s, the *Eagle* customarily published "extras" on big stories of national or local interest—including most local elections, and such national events as the World War I armistice and the Lindbergh baby kidnapping.

But with the advent of local radio broadcasting in 1938, the newspaper "extra" was doomed. Radio could present spot news more quickly and far more cheaply than the newspapers. It could also deliver it to the home instead of to the newsstand. After 1938, the only "extra" to come off the *Eagle* presses was on the night in August 1945, when the Japanese capitulation brought an end to World War II.

Another casualty of the radio was an *Eagle* service of a more indigenous nature. In the 1920s and early 1930s, play-by-play accounts of World Series baseball games and blow-by-blow accounts of important prize fights were "broadcast" on a sort of town-crier basis by an announcer shouting through a megaphone from the porch of the American House, or from a window of the Miller Building across North Street. The information was transmitted to him by telephone from the *Eagle* office, which received it by Morse wire.

From 1921 until the practice was discontinued in 1932, the broadcasts were made by Robert F. Munger, alderman and later fireman, whose stentorian voice won him the nickname of "Old Leather Lungs." It was not unusual for a crowd of a thousand or more to congregate before his megaphone, impeding traffic for several blocks. National election returns were also "broadcast," but visually, by means of a screen and stereopticon.

Still another casualty of time was the *Eagle's* weekly edition, which had been published every Wednesday since the paper became a daily in 1892. This edition, containing weekly correspondence from the smaller Berkshire towns and a compendium of local and county news stories printed during the preceding week, was primarily a mail-away service for readers in outlying districts and ex-Berkshire residents who had emigrated to other parts.

During World War II, when many servicemen subscribed, its circulation climbed to 1,700. But it declined rapidly to 525 by 1953, when it was suspended both because of mounting costs and because its function had been partly superseded by the expansion of the *Eagle's* Saturday edition to include round-up columns dealing with the week's news highlights.

Despite high costs and competing media, one adjunct of the *Eagle* remained a North Street fixture throughout the period. This was the newspaper's bulletin board, installed in 1915 on the North Street railroad bridge to transmit news bulletins from the *Eagle* newsroom to the street by means of an ingenious and temperamental system of gears and electric circuits.

Crowds gathered before it at election time to read the returns. Amateur firemen consulted it to learn the scene of action when the hook-and-ladder took off; sporting fans made a nightly pilgrimage to it to find out the day's scores before retiring. By 1951, when its mechanism grew too creaky to maintain, its audience had been considerably whittled down by radio news and the increasing tendency of citizens to stay home of an evening.

Many hands helped shape the character and content of the *Eagle* over the first half of the 20th century, but the individual whose personality it reflected beyond any others was Kelton B. Miller, owner and editor from 1894 until his death on December 2, 1941, at the age of 81.

Born in New Baltimore, New York, he came to Pittsfield at the age of eight to be reared by an aunt and uncle following the death of his mother. He was graduated from Pittsfield High School in 1876 and, after eight years in the grocery business, acquired a financial interest in the *Eagle*, following his election



as Pittsfield's first city clerk in 1891. Three years later, he resigned as clerk to take over active management of the paper, though he returned to City Hall to serve two one-year terms as Republican mayor in 1911 and 1912.

A man with a warm sense of humor, a common touch, and a deep sense of fair play, Miller was held in general respect and affection by the community even though his editorial policies were unswervingly Republican in an era when the city was leaning more and more toward the Democrats. As the *Springfield Republican* observed, "those who differed with him politically and otherwise never questioned the honesty and sincerity of his convictions."

Upon Miller's death, control of the paper came into the hands of his sons, Lawrence K. Miller, who took over the duties of editor, and Donald B. Miller, who became publisher. Under their management, the paper became politically independent and, in keeping with the times, less provincial in flavor and less conservative in make-up and style.

But the basic principles remained unchanged. Locally, the paper remained an undeviating champion of the non-partisan charter which Kelton Miller had done so much to establish. Regionally, it retained his interest in sound conservation measures, in preserving the county's natural heritage, and in encouraging at every turn its growing role as a mecca for tourists and a center for summer cultural activities.

Of the many other names associated with the *Eagle* during this period, none was better known to the public than that of Joseph Hollister (1877—1946), who came to the paper in 1898 from the Great Barrington weekly *Courier*, served as reporter and later associate editor, and became sole proprietor of "The Note Book," a daily column of random comment on the local scene. At the time of his retirement and death 48 years later, "The Note Book" had been continuously published under one byline longer than any other daily newspaper column in the country.

Another *Eagle* figure of extraordinarily long service was Dennis J. Haylon (1868—1939), who spent 50 years on the

staff, notably as managing editor, while still finding time for community activities ranging from the bicycle club, his first love, to the presidency of the Pittsfield Hillies professional baseball club, the presidency of the parent Eastern League in 1926, and two decades of service on the Park Commission.

As managing editor, he was succeeded in 1939 by George W. Edman, who had organized the paper's county coverage a decade earlier. Edman was one of the prime movers in establishing the Berkshire Symphonic Festival at Tanglewood. In 1947, he resigned from the *Eagle* to join the United States Information Agency.

From 1910 to 1928 the key job of city editor was filled by Clarence A. Crandall (1879—), a Hancock native who also covered many of the most celebrated Berkshire court cases of the period, achieved a measure of fame as a horticulturist, and in 1955 was still contributing a weekly column to the *Eagle's* "Our Berkshires" department. His successor as city editor was Donald L. Coleman (1898—1947). A founder of the Pittsfield Community Music School and the Community Concert Association, Coleman was responsible for reviving in 1929 the "*Eagle* Santa Toy Fund," which today raises some \$4,000 a year to buy toys for needy Berkshire children at Christmas time.

Other notable *Eagle* personalities of the period included Irving D. Sisson (1891—1940), who recorded the local scene with keen originality as staff photographer in the 1930s; Edward W. McCormick (1903—1947), who succeeded Edman as county editor; and John M. Flynn (1885—), who covered almost every beat on the paper. As sports editor from 1919 until his retirement in 1952, Flynn was known to county sports fans for his "Referee's Sporting Chat" column which he wrote for three decades and, since his retirement, is still writing on a weekly basis.

Collectively these men and the others who worked with them throughout the period stamped the *Eagle* with a character of its own. It was a paper that could take pride (though many readers might disagree) in keeping its editorial opinions on its editorial page, in presenting lively coverage while disdaining



sensationalism, in a willingness to take unpopular positions, and in giving its critics free rein to express their opinions in its news columns and carefully nurtured letters-to-the-editor department.

As a spokesman for middle-of-the-road political independence, the *Eagle* often found itself a target for partisans on both sides of the fence. But on issues of local and county concern it exerted, in 1955 as in 1916, a strong and often decisive influence on the thinking of the community.

### *Radio Station WBRK*

Pittsfield's first radio station, WBRK, made its initial broadcast on February 20, 1938. Among participants in this program, which emanated from the station's studios at 8 Bank Row, were Congressman Allen T. Treadway of Stockbridge and Mayor James Fallon. WBRK was associated with the Columbia Broadcasting System until 1940, when it affiliated with the Mutual Broadcasting System and its New England subsidiary, the Yankee Network.

The first owner and manager of the station was Harold Thomas. WBRK was bought in 1941 by Monroe B. England, who sold it in 1947 to Leon Podolsky of Pittsfield, one of the country's foremost electrical engineers, assistant to the president of the Sprague Electric Company of North Adams. Podolsky remains in control.

Since its founding, WBRK has been a familiar voice to the people of Pittsfield and the Berkshires. In addition to providing entertainment, the station has concentrated heavily on news broadcasts, especially local news, competing with the newspapers in this field as a matter of policy. In 1953, Larry Vaber, director of news, began a weekly broadcast of editorializing on local news, a new departure for radio in the Berkshires.

WBRK has had a pioneering spirit from the start. In 1938, from the local General Electric laboratory, it broadcast over a national network the first description and actual sound of man-made lightning. It was one of the first stations in the country to inaugurate in-school educational radio listening, designing spe-

cial programs for reception in classrooms in many Berkshire communities. The Sacred Heart program, a transcribed daily feature now heard on radio stations around the world, was first broadcast by WBRK in 1939, through the efforts of the Jesuit Fathers at Shadowbrook in Lenox.

The station does its share of public service broadcasting, as required by law. It makes its facilities available to organizations, clubs, churches, and other groups wishing to publicize their meetings and programs. For many years it has donated time on Sunday mornings for broadcasts from the local churches. Since 1938, it has covered, and reported by air, all of the big news in the Berkshires.

Among those whom Pittsfield and the surrounding area came to know by their voices over WBRK and who have since made names for themselves have been Bob Dixon, now with CBS; Frank McCarthy, now an executive of the Mutual Broadcasting System; Ray Dorey, today well known in Boston as an announcer and disc jockey.

### *Television Station WMGT*

The owners of WBRK, the Greylock Broadcasting Company, began planning for a local television station in 1947. The enterprise faced two formidable obstacles—one, to get a favorable channel assigned to the area; second, to find a favorable site for a television transmitter. The company wished to place its transmitting tower on Mount Greylock, the state's highest peak.

This proposal aroused considerable opposition in many quarters, for Greylock had been set aside as part of a state park which was not to be used for commercial purposes. It was Podolsky's contention that television in the Berkshires would not be feasible unless the transmitting tower were on Greylock because of the rugged nature of the area. After much debate, the state legislature passed a special bill clearing the way for a TV transmitter on Greylock.

This removed one block, but another remained. A UHF (ultra high frequency) channel had already been assigned to



the Berkshire area. But Podolsky contended that a UHF channel could not cover the Berkshires, and in 1951 applied for Channel 3, a VHF (very high frequency) channel. But Channel 3 was assigned to New London, Connecticut.

Early in 1953, UHF channel 74 was applied for and granted to the local station, which was assigned the call letters WMGT. Construction of the transmitting tower on Greylock began immediately. On February 22, 1954, the first telecast went out from there on Channel 74. As no UHF station had tried a channel as high as 74, operating at 500,000 watts, there were numerous breakdowns and difficulties.

Late in 1954, WMGT received permission from the Federal Communications Commission to change from channel 74 to 19. The results were beyond expectations. Clear reception of both pictures and sounds were reported not only in the Berkshires, but in Connecticut, eastern Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York. Viewers over a wide area received clear TV pictures on "19" until February 25, 1956, when WMGT had to suspend operations because storms severely damaged and tore down parts of its transmitting tower on Greylock.

Having been manager of radio station WBRK for ten years, John T. Parsons was named the first manager of WMGT, continuing to the summer of 1955, when he resigned to join WHYN-TV in Holyoke. His successor was William P. Geary, earlier with WBRK, who returned to Pittsfield in 1954 to become sales manager of WMGT.

Others on the staff included Edward W. Pearson, of Greenfield, as program director; Laughran (Larry) Vaber, of West Stockbridge, as director of news and publicity for combined WBRK—WMGT activities; M. Richard Bolender, long with WBRK, as film director; Dan Healy, veteran sportscaster, as sports director for WBRK—WMGT; and Leonard L. Lavidol, of North Adams, as chief engineer of the television station, in the designing and building of which he had played a large part.

*Radio Station WBEC*

WBEC, Pittsfield's second radio station, made its initial broadcast on March 25, 1947. The facility, a corporate component of *The Berkshire Eagle*, had a long and tortuous gestation period. As early as 1936 the city's only daily newspaper realized that the radio had supplanted the need for "extras" and was a valuable tool for the paper's own promotion, as well as for furnishing supplemental coverage in public service and entertainment.

The combination of opposition to its application before the Federal Communications Commission, however, was formidable. Nearby stations objected, anticipating electronic interference. The disposition of the FCC was not to allow a monopoly newspaper also to control the only local radio voice. Application grants were frozen during the war years. All of this resulted in WBEC coming on the air nearly 11 years after application was first made in Washington and nearly nine years after its local competitor, WBRK, began broadcasting.

With a 100-watt signal at 1,490 kilocycles, WBEC began its full-time operation as an affiliate of the American Broadcasting Company. James L. Spates of Presque Isle, Maine, who had had engineering service with a Greenfield radio station, became general manager of the 16-man organization. W. Wendell Budrow, advertising manager of the *Eagle* for 14 years, was the station's first commercial manager. Budrow succeeded Spates as general manager a year later. In July 1949, Spates resigned to establish and become part-owner of a station in West Springfield.

The studios and transmitter of WBEC were on the third floor of the Miller Building on the south side of Eagle Street, promptly dubbed the "WBEC Building." Signals were transmitted over a 190-foot tower erected at the rear of the building. Seven months after going on the air, the FCC allowed WBEC to increase its power to 250 watts. On April 30, 1948, WBEC added a 1,000-watt FM signal to its 250-watt AM transmission. Signals were sent out at a frequency of 94.3 megacycles through a transmitting unit mounted on top of the original AM tower,



raising the mast to a height of 206 feet. Programs were duplicated through each transmitter, with occasional exceptions.

In the belief that static-free, high fidelity FM broadcasting might supplant AM transmission, the *Eagle* Publishing Company purchased 14 acres of land on top of Washington Mountain in 1945 as a transmitter site to make possible regional coverage. Up through 1955, however, the land had not been used. Looking forward in another direction, WBEC purchased land in Windsor in 1952 as a television site, but the project has not been developed.

Progress for WBEC came in another direction. On June 7, 1956, the FCC granted WBEC a power increase to 1,000 watts on a frequency of 1,410 kilocycles. Prior to this grant, the WBEC building was marked for razing to provide space for a parking lot. WBEC went off the air for one day—December 7, 1955. The next day, it resumed broadcasting across the street from the remodeled third floor of the *Eagle* Building.

By 1957, WBEC hoped to be broadcasting over its new 1,000-watt transmitter, which will cover most of Berkshire County. Because of its higher power, Federal regulations required a transmitter site outside the center of the city. Accordingly, two 346-foot directional towers and transmitter buildings were erected in 1956 on a tract of swampy ground off Jason Street. The studios remained in the *Eagle* Building.

### *Chamber of Commerce*

Pittsfield has several organizations uniting the general interests of various businesses and professions. One of these is the Chamber of Commerce, which was born in the 1880s as the Board of Trade. By 1916 it had about 400 members. The Board was reorganized in 1919, at which time it changed its name to the Chamber of Commerce.

Through its standing committees—executive, membership, publicity, civic, industrial, mercantile, and transportation, among others—the Chamber brings to public attention matters of interest to the community, sponsors and helps organize civic events and celebrations of various kinds, endeavors to attract

new businesses and industry to the city and, in general, seeks to maintain and promote the prosperity and welfare of Pittsfield. It employs a paid secretary and a small staff to carry on its functions.

Providing a meeting ground and a center of action for younger business and professional people, the local chapter of the Junior Chamber of Commerce was founded in 1952 with more than a hundred attending the organizational meeting. The first president was Bernard E. Stelzenmuller. By its sponsorship and active promotion of various community projects, especially youth programs, the local organization has well carried out the founding principle of the Junior Chambers of Commerce across the land—that “service to mankind is the best work in life.”

### *Pittsfield Industrial Development Company*

The Pittsfield Industrial Development Company was organized in 1919 by a group of local businessmen. This company had as its first objective the buying of a large part of the extensive Allen stock farm off the Dalton road. The owner of the farm, William Russell Allen, had died a few years previously and the 1,250-acre tract was being broken up and sold as small building lots.

Part of the Allen farm lay along the tracks of the Boston and Albany railroad, offering good sites for factories. The Pittsfield Industrial Development Company bought this part of the farm—264 acres—for the purpose of holding it intact for future industrial development. Almost all of this tract was later sold to General Electric for the expansion of its Morningside plant. “PID,” as it is known, works in various ways to help maintain existing industry and attract new industry to the city. Daniel England Jr. has been president of the company since 1946.

In 1955, General Electric shifted its manufacture of industrial heating equipment from Pittsfield and gave the building it had been using for such manufacture, a four-storied brick structure on Columbus Avenue, to the Pittsfield Industrial Development Company to assist the latter in its efforts to attract



new manufacturing concerns to the city and thus diversify its industry—a goal which the community generally recognized to be a highly desirable one.

Late in 1955, the Chamber of Commerce, the Pittsfield Industrial Development Company, and the Berkshire Hills Conference, which is a county-wide organization, decided to join forces in the field of promotion and of industrial and recreational planning. Each of the three organizations retained its identity and autonomy. John F. Downing, executive director of the Berkshire Hills Conference since 1953, was placed in charge of the joint program aimed at expanding the economy of the area, preserving its cultural assets, protecting its natural beauty, and bringing more diversified industry into the county scheme in a logical manner.

## *Morningside Becomes Electric*

THE GENERAL ELECTRIC COMPANY, one of the great productive enterprises of our country and the world, celebrated in 1953 the 75th anniversary of its founding, and the 50th year of its operations in Pittsfield. Its 75th birthday occurred on October 15, 1953. For the occasion, GE established a "baby derby," giving an award to any child born to a GE employee on that day. The idea for this derby came from William D. Haylon, born and educated in Pittsfield, at the time in the New York office of General Electric.

The wives of fifteen local GE employees "produced" on derby day. Each of the children received five shares of GE stock, worth at the time almost \$400. Within a year, GE stock was split three shares for one, and each "baby derby" winner then had 15 shares. By the end of 1955, with the increase in the value of the shares, each lucky youngster had a nest egg of almost \$900, having accumulated dividends in the meantime. One local Mrs. had a child just 34 minutes before "baby derby" day began—a most expensive "miss"!

The General Electric Company, the largest manufacturer of electrical equipment in the world, grew out of the work of Thomas A. Edison and other pioneers in the field. In 1878, Edison founded the Edison Electric Light Company at Menlo Park, New Jersey, where he produced the first successful incandescent lamp. He established other small plants to make various elec-



trical supplies, including the Edison Machine Works on Goerck Street in New York. Moving this plant to Schenectady in 1886, he combined it with other of his enterprises as the Edison General Electric Company.

Two other pioneers, Professor Elihu Thomson and Edwin J. Houston, combined their interests and in 1883 established the Thomson-Houston Electric Company at West Lynn, Massachusetts. This plant was merged with the Schenectady plant in 1892 to form the General Electric Company.

The first multiple system of alternating current distribution in this country was designed by Professor Thomson in 1878. Soon, on an experimental basis, he installed some transformers to light one of the Thomson-Houston factories in Lynn. But this company, like that of Edison, continued to promote the use of direct current. William Stanley designed and operated this country's first commercial alternating current system in 1886 at Great Barrington, about twenty miles south of Pittsfield. In this project George Westinghouse provided financial backing.

Parting with Westinghouse, Stanley interested a group of Pittsfield men in starting a new venture. Under circumstances related earlier,\* they formed in 1890 the Stanley Electric Manufacturing Company. Three months later, in a building off Clapp Avenue, the company completed its first transformers for use on the new alternating current systems that were rapidly increasing in number, size, and popularity.

Stanley was a genius who visualized the a-c concept and how it could be made to work. As associates, he had John F. Kelly, a noted engineer and inventor, who pioneered in developing silicon steel alloys for magnetic transformer cores; and Cummings C. Chesney, the practical designer and executive who superintended the building of Stanley products for commercial use. To avoid the basic Tesla patents on so-called three-phase a-c systems, these men developed an entirely new two-phase electrical system of generation, transmission, and use. Using the first letters of their names, they called it the S.K.C. system.

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Soon needing more space for building generators, transformers, motors, and other equipment, the company moved to another building on Clapp Avenue, then to a larger structure on the east side of Renne Avenue. The move to new Buildings 1, 2, and 3, off Woodlawn Avenue in the Morningside area, came at the turn of the century, when local financing became inadequate, and outside capital was brought in. The business was merged with the Roebling interests, becoming the Stanley-G.I. Electric Manufacturing Company. The outstanding reputation established by the Stanley Company in the field of high voltage transmission had made it a formidable competitor of the General Electric Company.

The latter acquired the Stanley Company in 1903, operating it autonomously until 1907, when it was made the Pittsfield Works of the General Electric Company. All high-voltage transformer work at Schenectady and Lynn was transferred to Pittsfield under Chesney, with Walter S. Moody, one of the Thomson-Houston pioneers, as designing engineer. The next decade was a period of steady development, with transformers increasing in size and voltage. Small pole-type transformers, small single-phase motors, arc lamps, voltage regulators, high-voltage bushings, current limiting reactors, lightning arresters, fans, electric ranges, and other heating devices—all these came from the Morningside plant. In 1914, the first important high voltage laboratory was set up here. Ever since, Pittsfield has truly been the High Voltage Capital of the world.

Early in 1916, William Stanley died, after a long illness, at his home in Great Barrington. He was the first of the famous trio to go. His associate, John F. Kelly, lived until 1922; Chesney until 1947.

Before our entry into World War I and all during hostilities, the local plant made shell cases for Russia. The Screw Machine Department produced large quantities of fuse caps for shell heads and numerous other machine parts for military equipment. There was no other war work at the local plant, but normal production of transformers, motors, and related equipment was quite essential to the war effort.



In 1916, patriotic feelings rose high at the plant. Nine of its engineers were at the Officers Training Camp in Plattsburg, New York, and 51 of its men were serving with Company F at the Mexican Border. In the following year, many men entered the armed services. Employees aided fund raising for relief of war prisoners, and sale of Liberty Loans. Common need encouraged the planting of home "war gardens," the knitting of mittens by machine at the Red Cross, and the establishment of a club for the cooperative purchase of coal by employees. Many women took the jobs of men in service, working on punch presses, lathes, drills, milling, wire-covering, and winding machines, as well as operating overhead cranes.

The war speeded the development of a process for the electrical welding of steel plates for large transformer tanks. Previously, they had been riveted and caulked. Much of the pioneer work in this field, subsequently used in shipyards, was done at the Pittsfield works under the general direction of Robert E. Wagner, Assistant Superintendent.

In product development, transformers became steadily larger, with new forms of cooling radiators for their tanks. A conservator (auxiliary expansion tank) design was introduced to prevent the then prevalent deterioration of the cooling and insulating oil inside the transformer, a method that established a higher standard of transformer reliability.

A new form of lightning arrester, the oxide-film type, was developed at Pittsfield to protect large transformers from lightning. This remained standard until superseded in 1930 by an even better design, the Thyrite arrester, which, with steady improvements, is the type still built here today.

The 1920s brought significant developments at Morningside in the field of higher voltages that made possible the transmission of larger blocks of electric power over greater distances. Since 1913, the highest potential in service had remained at 150,000 volts. Early in 1921, the first 220,000 volt power transformers were tested and shipped to the Southern California Edison Company for bringing power to Los Angeles from hydro-electric plants many miles away in the mountains.

## MORNINGSIDE BECOMES ELECTRIC

An important local development in 1929 was the so-called "non-resonating" or "shielded" transformer, developed to a commercial basis by Konstantin K. Paluev from the 1915 theory and tests of J. Murray Weed, Louis F. Blume, John S. Lennox and Aram Boyajian. In these units, it was possible for the first time to know positively that lightning voltages reaching a transformer would be absorbed uniformly throughout the structure, rather than piling up at some point and causing a failure of the insulation.

Transmission voltages remained in the so-called 230,000 volt class until 1934, when 287,500-volt units built in Pittsfield were sent to Boulder (now Hoover) Dam. The next record breaker was in 1947, when a 360,000-volt power transformer was built and tested to destruction in order to extend the frontiers of design knowledge available to Pittsfield engineers and skilled assemblers.

The 1920s also brought startling new gains in super high-voltages for testing the electrical strength of transformers and other equipment. In September 1921, for the first time, a 1,000,000-volt flash of man-made lightning was produced in the High Voltage Laboratory. Two years later, this was increased to 2,000,000 volts. In 1925, a chain-connected set of six transformers to produce this voltage was ordered by Leland Stanford University. The next jump was to 3,000,000 volts in 1930. This was used by Frank W. Peek, Jr. to make, for the first time, an impulse (lightning surge) test on a power transformer destined for use on a commercial power system.

In five more years, 10,000,000 volts had been reached, and an impressive demonstration was staged for Governor James M. Curley and his official family. Shortly thereafter, ten-million volt lightning strokes with Pittsfield-built equipment were made familiar to millions of people attending General Electric's exhibit at the New York World's Fair.

The most recent increase in test voltages was made in June 1949, when the present High Voltage Laboratory off Tyler Street was opened with Julius H. Hagenguth as manager. It remains the world's largest man-made lightning center. It can



produce 15,000,000-volt bolts that jump 50 feet through the air. One of the two generators can be moved outside the building for making tests on outdoor lines and equipment.

During the 1920s, facilities were steadily expanded. A new auditorium was added to the rear of Building 16, then the fire station, almost on the spot occupied twenty years earlier by the indoor rink of the Pittsfield Curling Club. A new building was erected for kiln-drying, impregnating, and storing wood for insulation. The Columbus Avenue Plant, used since 1917 for drawing and covering wire, became the new quarters of the Heating Device Department, under Charles C. Abbott. Additions were made to the test facilities for large transformers, and a new works laboratory building was completed.

In 1921, a new plant was built on Ceramic Avenue (now Plastics Avenue) for the manufacture of porcelains for bushings, cutouts, and similar uses. This was a complete operation, from the mixing and puddling of clay slip to the final glazing in kilns. It continued only a few years, for it was found to be more economical to purchase the porcelains from GE plants elsewhere.

By 1920, the evening class program for employees, started in 1913, had been expanded to include large classes in mechanics, principles of electricity, transformers, motors, electrical machinery, English, arithmetic, elementary and advanced algebra and geometry, elementary calculus, bookkeeping, typewriting, drawing, and stenography.

Later that year, the company established a plan for employees wishing to build homes, taking second mortgages up to 30 per cent of the total cost. As 60 per cent was readily obtainable from commercial banks at the time, the employee had to advance only 10 per cent of the total, usually about the price of the lot. Many local employees made use of this plan.

In 1922, GE established the Charles A. Coffin Foundation, which makes awards to employees for outstanding contributions to company progress in particular and to electrical science and technology in general.

One of the first pension plans in industry was established by General Electric in 1912. A major advance in such plans occurred in 1927 when GE established a separate trust fund to guarantee pensions. Up to this time, there had been no funding of industrial pension plans. In 1928, another forward step was taken with a system allowing employees to increase their regular pension by adding some of their own savings, known as additional pension.

As early as 1920, employees had group life insurance coverage at no cost to them, with coverage varying from \$150 to \$1,500. In 1925, this plan was greatly amplified by what was called additional group life insurance, giving as much as \$2,000 more coverage to employees. Since then, the insurance plan has undergone constant study and improvements until, in 1955, the principal of an employees' life insurance policy was equal to twice that person's annual earnings.

One of the outstanding scientists at the local plant during the 1920s and for some years before was Giuseppe Faccioli. Born in Italy, the son of an army colonel, educated at the Milan Institute of Technology, Faccioli worked as a design engineer in his homeland for three years.

Coming to this country, he was employed first by the New York Edison Company and then by the Interborough Rapid Transit Company, installing lights in the subway. He soon met Stanley. The latter had heard of Faccioli's remarkable mathematical abilities and asked him to solve an alternating current problem, which involved some pioneering in mathematics. Carefully calculating the problem in different ways, Faccioli checked the result exactly and later found his work verified by an experiment which so impressed Stanley that in 1905 Faccioli came to Pittsfield to work for the Stanley Company.

In 1908, Faccioli became chief engineer at the local works. His interest, knowledge, and enthusiasm in many fields, particularly in that of high voltage, provided the inspiration that sparked much local research.

Faccioli was one of the prophets who foresaw the atomic age. In 1924, in an issue of "G.E. Current News," he predicted that,



within a generation or two, science would successfully accomplish the transmutation of matter. Intense energy, he pointed out, was required to change the structure of a substance. Reviewing basic atomic theory, he concluded:

"To tear down, or break down, the atomic structure, and then to rebuild it in such a way that it becomes an atom of a different substance—that is the problem of transmutation of matter . . . But I believe it will be. I believe it will actually be done . . . It has become a possibility, even though a remote possibility."

Because of his death in January 1934, Faccioli did not live to see this done, but the possibility of accomplishment was not as remote as he assumed. Significantly, it was the Pittsfield works which, in the 1930s, produced the huge coils and magnetic cores for the cyclotrons that aided scientists in smashing the atom.

The manufacture of plastics has been an important part of the work of the Morningside plant since 1909 when carbon rods were being molded for use in arc lamps. Other molded products were used as insulation in transformers at that time.

Natural products were used to make molded parts until the value of synthetic phenolic resins was brought into focus by Augustus McK. Gifford at the local plant about 1918. Realizing the importance of plastics to the growing electrical industry, General Electric was among the first to make significant contributions to the development of synthetic materials. Introduction of Banbury equipment in the production of phenolic molding compounds, vacuum dehydration of liquid varnish and molding resins, roller mill grinding of resins, and many other important developments were perfected and put into use.

At this time, the first polyester resins (called Glyptals\*) were discovered in Pittsfield and developed as insulating materials. They found wide use in alkyd coating materials for electrical equipment, in paints and varnishes, and in enamels such as those which coat trains, automobiles, electric refrigerators, washing machines, and other appliances.

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\*Trade-mark of GE Co.

## MORNINGSIDE BECOMES ELECTRIC

During the 1920s, production of molded parts continued to grow. Production was particularly large in the late 1920s when molded bases for radio tubes were introduced. These bases were manufactured by the millions in Pittsfield because they met the demands of tube manufacturers for a base that would provide an inexpensive method for tube replacement.

Like business elsewhere, Plastics and General Electric's other divisions were struck hard during the depression of 1930. Lay-offs became increasingly serious across the country, and Pittsfield was no exception. In the fall of 1931, to lessen hardships as much as possible during the winter ahead, General Electric adopted a company-wide plan to prevent any lack-of-work lay-offs without compensation from November 1, 1931 to April 1, 1932. During this period, all persons on the payroll on November 1 received not less than half their full-time earnings for the period, but in no case more than an average of \$15 a week unless it was actually earned.

As early as 1915, employees had formed a Mutual Benefit Association to aid its members in cases of disability caused by sickness or accidents, and with payment of benefits in case of death. The Association grew and improved. Reorganized in 1934, it continued until the need for it was removed by improvements in the company's insurance plan. In 1936 there was instituted a plan of adjusting wages according to changes in the cost of living index, and where surveys indicated the need for action to keep GE pay rates equal to or higher than those paid in the community for comparable work requiring the same skill and efficiency. The employees established a Credit Union in 1934.

In 1926, Cummings C. Chesney was elected national president of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers. In 1928 he was named by the General Electric Company as vice president in charge of manufacturing, being succeeded as plant manager by Edward A. Wagner. At the same time Faccioli was made associate manager, and Frank W. Peek, Jr., an expert in high-voltage theory and experiments, was made chief engineer. Chesney retired in 1931 after serving the plant more than forty



years, ever since its founding in 1890 as the Stanley Company. He remained active in business and community affairs in Pittsfield until his death in 1947.

Other major changes occurred in the top management of the plant in the early 1930s. Wagner retired in 1932 and was followed by Louis E. Underwood as plant manager. Peek was unfortunately killed in a car-train collision in 1933 and Frederick F. Brand was made engineering manager of the apparatus plant and laboratories.

In spite of the depression, expansion of the plant continued. A new tank shop, a structure of modern glass window design, was opened with unprecedented ceremony. The shop had so many windows that a moving platform was arranged around the outside of the building for the convenience of window washers. The Works hospital was renovated and enlarged.

The decade brought two important developments in transformers. For years, the only liquid available for insulating and cooling transformers was mineral oil, which served its purpose well. But reliable as transformers were, failure would occasionally result in a disastrous fire. National codes prohibited the installation of large transformers indoors unless they were surrounded by fireproof vaults. A non-flammable insulating liquid would offer substantial installation economies. At the same time, there was a demand for a new liquid impregnant for capacitors, equipment which offered great savings both to power companies and to industry.

By the combined efforts of Gifford, head of the Works laboratory, and of many physicists and engineers, headed by Frank M. Clark, a new liquid was synthesized for the purpose. Literally tailored from molecules (trichlor benzene and penta-chlor diphenyl), the new liquid was given the GE trade name of Pyranol (no-fire). It was the progenitor of many similar liquids known throughout the electrical industry by the generic name of askarel.

The qualities of Pyranol were such that they enabled the size of capacitors to be reduced by two thirds, which greatly lowered cost, and for the first time made economically practic-

able the widespread use of these equipments. Capacitors have the unusual property of enabling more power to be transmitted over the same circuit. They not only improve operating conditions, but substantially reduce power costs.

Another development of national import occurred in 1937 with the perfection of the wound-core or Spirakore\* transformer. John C. Granfield invented this new core, using a cold-rolled silicon steel developed by the Allegheny Steel Company, a logical extension of Kelly's work forty years earlier. This core made it possible to build small pole-type transformers of higher efficiency yet with less size and weight, and at substantial savings to buyers. The steel was soon improved by the joint work of Weston Morrill of the Pittsfield laboratory with engineers of Allegheny Steel and applied throughout the entire range of transformer design. This development has saved electric power companies of the country hundreds of millions of dollars.

World War II brought a flood of power transformer orders to Pittsfield as electric utility companies expanded to meet the increasing demands for power from industries all over the country. At the same time, new kinds of equipment began to come off the production lines, including 6000-HP motors for the propulsion of tankers. These motors were made on part of the transformer assembly floor, the first time any rotating equipment had been built there for nearly forty years. Tubes for the first bazookas were made in the tube rolling building across from the "Foundry Gate," near Silver Lake.

Other equipment was designed, built, and shipped under top secret restrictions. Not till the first bomb exploded over Hiroshima did Pittsfield employees learn that some of them had worked on rectifier equipment to power the tremendous production lines for the atomic materials plant at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, that made the bomb possible. Other important contributions of Pittsfield workers were the radar power supplies for battleships; also for fighter planes in sizes so small that they would fit behind the pilot's head.

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\*Trade-mark of GE Co.



The war period brought few changes in commercial transformers and allied products. Designers were too busy with war work. But new ways were found to cool large power transformers more effectively and make them "work harder," thus releasing more of such critical materials as copper for the war effort. A new material, Lectrofilm\*, was synthesized at the Pittsfield Laboratory from materials readily available in this country. It took the place of mica, which was difficult to obtain from India and other faraway places, and was used in capacitors for radio communication equipment. Capacitors tinier than matchsticks were developed for use in proximity fuses.

War needs led to the construction of two Naval Ordnance plants on the west side of Plastics Avenue. Building began in November 1940. By the following August, under Wilbur L. Young as manufacturing engineer and Burton S. Francis as superintendent, the first plant was in full operation. Eight months later, in the spring of 1942, it shipped its first gunfire control equipment for installation on the U.S.S. *Fletcher*, a destroyer. Throughout the war, the plant supplied the Navy with gunfire control systems for installation on destroyers, cruisers, carriers, and battleships.

A second Naval Ordnance plant was completed in August 1943. It first produced heavy 5,000-horsepower motors to propel destroyer-escorts. Later in the war, production was shifted to making small fractional horsepower motors, many of which went into B-29 Superforts and other planes.

The war brought a great boom to local Plastics operations. In 1937, under G. Harry Shill as manager, operations had been moved from Building 36 off East Street to the former porcelain plant on what had been Ceramic and now became Plastics Avenue. During the war, Plastics produced large quantities of fuses for trench mortar shells, loop antenna housings for the Air Force, and stern tube bearings for submarines.

The loop antenna housings previously used by the Air Force gave trouble through corrosion and the buildup of electrical charge which sent off sparks, causing radios to function improperly and making the aircraft a better target for attack.

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\*Trade-mark of GE Co.

After much study and many tests, Plastics technicians corrected the defects by developing an ammonia-free resin that prevented corrosion and by using a graphite filler to correct the sparking condition.

Plastics also developed new and better stern tube, rudder, and roller mill bearings. During the war, difficulty was experienced with the rubber bearings then used in submarines. They squeaked at critical times when listening enemy vessels could hear them on their sound detectors. The use of plastics proved to be the answer to the stern tube problem of submarines. U.S.S. *Dahlgren*, a destroyer, was the first ship to be equipped with plastic rudder bearings. Plastic bearings have also proved useful in the roller mills of the steel industry because they last longer than the metal bearings formerly used.

In 1941, William H. Milton, Jr., became manager of the Plastics plant. Plastics was merged with the newly formed Chemical Department in 1945, with Dr. Zay Jeffries as vice president and general manager. A noted metallurgist, Dr. Jeffries was soon awarded the Clamer Medal for high achievements in his field.

In 1940, with the passage of this country's first peacetime Selective Service Act, the General Electric Company had given its employees entering the armed forces a month's pay, a year's leave of absence, and allowed them a period of forty days to apply for reemployment. During the war, 2,973 of those in the plant were called to serve in the armed forces; 46 of these were later listed as dead or missing. Those remaining behind to keep the plant operating did their fair share, and more, in support of war bond, Red Cross, and other emergency drives.

As the war drew to a close, the General Electric Company announced that employment at the Pittsfield works would be stabilized at about 10,200. This was double the 1936—40 average of 5,100. Employment at the Morningside plant has fluctuated around the 10,000—11,000 level.

Allan B. Hendricks, Jr., a pioneer in transformer design, the man who directed the building of the first million-volt units for the High Voltage Laboratory, retired in 1944 after 43 years of



service. The next year, Louis E. Underwood retired as general manager of the plant and was succeeded by Robert Paxton.

The post-war years brought steady expansion in all phases of GE operations in Pittsfield. The first Naval Ordnance plant continued operations, which were rapidly stepped up after the outbreak of the Korean War. That war reactivated the second Naval Ordnance plant, which since World War II had been used for shipping purposes and power transformer winding operations. The plant was refitted to make torpedoes for submarines and other warships. Increasing defense orders necessitated the building of a third Naval Ordnance plant, which was completed early in 1952.

In 1951, Walter B. Booth was named general manager of the Pittsfield Ordnance Operation, which in 1952 became the Naval Ordnance Department of the Aeronautic and Ordnance Systems Division. It later (1956) became a section of the Missile and Ordnance Systems Department.

Products now being manufactured or developed in the Ordnance plants include missile and gunfire control system directors, drives, and related components; underwater ordnance equipment; radar antennas for both ship and land installations of the Army, Navy, and Air Force and other projects of highest priority for our nation's defense program. Unusual products are water-activated batteries, which are used as power sources in the propulsion system of torpedoes.

Other facilities at the Morningside works were improved and enlarged. In 1947, a new plant was completed off Plastics Avenue for the manufacture of magnesium oxide, an insulating material that withstands high temperatures. This enabled the company to double its capacity for producing this essential material which is used inside the heating elements on electric ranges and similar apparatus.

A new \$2,000,000 High Voltage Laboratory was completed in 1949. This year also marked the retirement of Augustus McK. Gifford, the head of the Works Laboratory. During his long service, the staff of this laboratory, one of the oldest in the electrical industry, expanded from two persons to a group

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of 330 scientists studying and experimenting in chemistry, physics, and metallurgy.

In 1950, larger quarters were provided for the laboratory and manufacturing units of Plastics. A new pilot plant was erected for the development of phenolic materials used in making plastic products.

Molded products made in Pittsfield have ranged from horn buttons and various parts for automobiles to flying bazookas installed in Thunderbolt and other fighter planes. The bazookas were made with a special paper impregnated with resin, developed by the joint work of the laboratories of Plastics and the Byron Weston Company in neighboring Dalton.

Included in the long list of plastic products developed, engineered, and produced in Pittsfield are such things as clothes pins for indoor lines, radio and television cabinets, polyester resins (used in boat hulls, swimming pools, orthopedic braces and casts, flying saucer sleds for children), record holders, luggage, stenotype housings, shoe heels, dishes, lipstick and other cosmetic containers, shoe stitching machine parts, bobbins for the textile industry, dry shaver cases, wheels for hospital beds and other furniture, autobridge boards, adding machine housings, cameras, cigarette cases, pen and pencil sets, telephones, and a multitude of household items. In short, Plastics has pioneered a great many products in common use today in every household and in wide areas of industry.

General Electric's irradiated polyethylene, a discovery made by the Research Laboratory at Schenectady, was subjected to intensive product and process development during 1953 and 1954 in Pittsfield. The new material, called "Irrathene," has superior properties resulting from bombardment of polyethylene with high energy cathode rays from million-volt electron generators. It has made possible the building of smaller electrical equipment with improved operating characteristics and may create radically new heat-resistant and sterilizable transparent containers for foods, drugs, and pharmaceutical products. This is one of the first industrial uses of electron irradiation.



The atom was put to work in the Pittsfield plant in 1954, when it was used as a tracer in molding compounds. This is the first peacetime use of the atom in the plastics molding industry. The problem of mold erosion, which had long plagued the industry, was solved by radioactive tracer techniques originated and developed here. The new radioactive measurement process has made possible a four-fold improvement in some grades of thermosetting molding materials. It is said to detect and measure one part of metal in 20 million parts of plastics, thereby determining the amount of erosion caused in large metal molds by plastic molding compounds.

Also in 1954, a technical service foundry for experimental work was set up to produce shells and pour castings. Designed to offer consulting services to foundries, the unit includes sand-mixing and shell molding equipment, induction furnaces capable of melting all types of metal, pouring facilities to reproduce precise castings in the customer's own metal, and sand-blasting equipment for cleaning and finishing castings.

Shell molding is the modern method of casting smooth-surfaced metal parts to close tolerances and is being adopted by many of the nation's leading foundries. Phenolic resin, made at Pittsfield, is used to bind sand in a thin mold called a shell mold, into which molten metal is poured. The method used in conventional foundry practice involves the pouring of the molten metal into heavy sand molds where the two halves are made by ramming clay-bonded sand against a wooden pattern. Such molds are less expensive. But the finished product cannot be held to the close tolerances that are possible through the use of the shell mold.

Local GE scientists and engineers have also made notable advances in producing the insulating material known as silicones. They have made numerous contributions to silicone rubbers, pastes for tapes and gasket compounds, as well as sealing caps and sleeves. The chemical field appears unlimited as laboratory technicians make new discoveries in fields never dreamed possible when the Plastics Division was first formed in Pittsfield.

## MORNINGSIDE BECOMES ELECTRIC

In 1948, Harold F. Smiddy became general manager of the Chemical Department. In 1951, he was succeeded by Robert L. Gibson, formerly head of the Plastics Division. Gibson was subsequently made a company vice president in charge of its Chemical and Metallurgical Division with headquarters in Pittsfield.

The post-war period brought some major advances in transformer development. In 1953, a technique was developed for designing transformers in miniature electro-magnetic models of only a fraction the size and cost of the actual transformer. By testing these models before building the full-sized unit, the behavior of the transformer can be determined with extreme accuracy. For his work in this field, Dr. Pier A. Abetti gained international recognition.

The next year, Dr. Abetti successfully worked out the technique of making preliminary transformer designs by using electronic computers, or "electric brains," which make millions of calculations in a period of hours or days, giving more accurate results than can be had by hand or slide rule in months or years.

Late in 1954, with utility executives from all over the country attending, the local plant dedicated an outstanding structure, the world's largest sound laboratory, a \$1,500,000 building "dedicated to the search for quieter power transformers." This new anechoic chamber is one of the largest and most complete ever built for the purpose of studying sound and its properties, and is being used to learn how to improve the sound characteristics of transformers.

Early in 1955, the plant shipped two record-breaking transformers to the Tennessee Valley Authority. Each unit was rated 300,000 kva and 161,000 volts. Yet such progress had been made in reducing the size and weight of transformers that each unit was shipped on a single drop-frame flat car, in upright position, ready to be slid off at its destination. Other "monsters," weighing 218 tons each, were under construction to operate on a 330,000 volt system for the Atomic Energy Commission.



In 1947, after 44 years of service, Lewis R. ("Buster") Brown had retired. Since 1923, he had been manager of the entire transformer sales division and as such, it is generally agreed, "did more than any other man to build up the transformer business in Pittsfield." An ardent baseball fan, he was a close friend of many of the great players, and in 1924 was president of the Pittsfield Hillies then playing in the Eastern League.

Franz X. Brugger, assistant to the plant manager, retired in 1948. An expert in finance, he later served with distinction as chairman of the city's School Building Commission. In 1949, after 47 years of service dating back to the old Stanley company, Frederick F. Brand retired as manager of engineering, later serving the city on the Infirmary Building Commission. He was succeeded by Karl B. McEachron, internationally known for his high voltage research. Shortly after his appointment, McEachron was awarded the Edison Medal of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers for "outstanding contribution to the advancement of electrical science." McEachron too was active in community affairs, serving as chairman of the Traffic Commission. He died early in 1954.

Robert Paxton was transferred in 1950 to GE headquarters at Schenectady to become vice president in charge of manufacturing policy. He was succeeded as general manager of the Morningside plant by James M. Crawford, who in turn was followed the next year by Francis E. Fairman, Jr.

The year 1952 opened with the decentralization of the Morningside plant into several separate operating departments, each with its own complete organization. The Distribution Transformer Department was headed by Raymond W. Smith; the Power Transformer Department by William S. Ginn; the Transformer Laboratories Department by Horace S. Hubbard, and the Capacitor Department by Alfred W. Hough. The capacitor factory was at Hudson Falls, New York, with an additional plant at nearby Fort Edward, where the small capacitor business had moved from Pittsfield in 1945.

## MORNINGSIDE BECOMES ELECTRIC

All of these department managers reported to Fairman, then general division manager, and later a vice president of the company. He was succeeded in 1954 as division manager by Ginn, and Joseph W. Seaman became general manager of the Power Transformer Department.

During the post-war years, there were several shifts of product from the Morningside plant in addition to the capacitor move. The making of small transformers was transferred to a plant in Holyoke. In 1952, the company began building a \$25,000,000 power transformer factory in Rome, Georgia, and some members of the Pittsfield staff were transferred there. Two years later, the company announced its plan to build another large factory for small distribution transformers, near Hickory, North Carolina.

In 1955, the manufacture of industrial heating apparatus in Pittsfield moved to Shelbyville, Indiana. The Columbus Avenue plant used for such manufacture was given by General Electric to the Pittsfield Industrial Development Company to aid the latter in its efforts to attract new enterprise to the city.

In spite of transfers and dispersals, production and employment at the Morningside plant remained high. Production in 1954 was valued at more than \$150,000,000. As remarked before, three out of five of those gainfully employed in Pittsfield are on the GE payroll. This payroll during 1955 averaged more than \$1,000,000 a week. The growth of the plant and the rise in wage and salary scales can be seen from these figures, given for December of respective years (figures are approximate):

<i>Year</i>	<i>Employees</i>	<i>Weekly Payroll</i>
1916	6,500	\$ 88,000
1929	8,050	254,000
1932	3,000*	52,200
1942	12,850	570,000
1948	12,420	850,000
1954	10,375	1,000,000 (plus)

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\*During the Depression, every effort was made to spread the work through shortened and staggered work-hours.



As General Electric's operations in Pittsfield grew larger and larger, so did the company's need for skilled craftsmen. To meet this need, GE stepped up its four-year program of apprentice training. Before 1920 General Electric averaged about a dozen apprentice graduates each year. By 1955 the number exceeded fifty. In addition to training toolmakers and draftsmen, GE began in 1955 to offer on-the-job electrician training.

To attract high-caliber young men to Pittsfield, General Electric established high standards for its apprentice program. The days of the extremely low-paid apprentice were gone. In fact, GE apprentice wages were high enough for many apprentices to marry and begin raising their families. A major step in industrial education took place in 1955 when General Electric negotiated with the University of Massachusetts to establish a college-level engineering program, making it possible for a young man to earn college credits while still on the job in Pittsfield.

The Morningside plant has had a labor union since 1940. The first great strike at the plant began early in September 1916, when some 5,000 workers walked out and marched two abreast in an impressive and orderly parade along Pittsfield's main streets.\* Conflict had arisen when the company, in offering a 5 per cent pay increase, declared that if any employees had complaints or grievances, the management would talk with them individually, or through committees of their choosing. But it would have no dealings with trade unions. National officials of two unions—the Carpenters and Joiners, and the Patternmakers—came to aid the strikers. After a month, the State Board of Conciliation and Arbitration effected a settlement, under which the strikers returned to work on the terms of the company's original offer.

Organization of workers in the Morningside works first began to make headway in 1937, after the historic decision of the United States Steel Company to sign a company-wide union contract with the CIO steel workers. General Electric soon agreed to discuss a similar contract with the CIO electrical

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\*For details of the 1916 strike, the reader is referred to pages 94-96.

workers union. Organization in Pittsfield was slow. But by 1939 two locals of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers Union (CIO) had been established at the plant—one for shop workers, the other for office workers.

The next year, the locals petitioned the National Labor Relations Board for an election to determine whether employees wished the UERMW to act as their bargaining agent. Voting affirmatively, the shop workers chose Local 255 to represent them; and the “white collar” workers, Local 254. John H. Callahan was business agent of Local 255 from 1943 to 1955, when he joined the national staff of IUE-CIO. Arthur J. LaBlue was elected to succeed him.

After World War II, the Morningside plant was closed down by what is still locally known as “the great strike.” It was a time of rising prices and lower total wages, and the union locals asked for a pay raise of \$2 a day.

When the request was refused, a strike vote was called, being conducted by National Labor Relations Board examiners. Workers voted overwhelmingly to walk out, and the strike began on January 15, 1946, continuing till the middle of March. Under the settlement, employees were granted a 10 per cent pay increase, with somewhat higher percentages for those earning less than \$1 an hour.\*

In the late 1940s, the Communist issue split the unions and placed General Electric in an uncertain position. National law required that trade union officials swear that they were not Communists, or under Communist domination, if their unions were to be accredited officially as bargaining agents by the National Labor Relations Board. The leaders of UE declined to take the oath. Late in 1949, for this and other reasons, UE was expelled from the CIO, which organized a rival union, the International Electrical Workers, known as IUE-CIO.

To clarify the situation, General Electric had the National Labor Relations Board conduct an election among workers in all its ninety-nine plants across the country to determine which union they wished to represent them. Each plant voted as a unit.

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\*For details of the 1946 strike, the reader is referred to pages 214-215.



Morningside employees chose IUE-CIO by a large majority. A UE local still functions in Pittsfield, not however at General Electric, but its membership has steadily declined.

During the early 1950s, labor-management relations at the plant were cooperative and peaceful, except for minor grievances. Late in 1955, General Electric and IUE signed a five year contract, something of an innovation. Locals 255 and 254 ratified the pact, which should assure some years of industrial peace in the city's largest industry and its chief source of livelihood.

## *Clubs and Organizations*

PITTSFIELD HAS ALWAYS BEEN VERY "CLUBBY." Not in the worst sense of that word, meaning that the community has divided itself up into mutually exclusive groups, though there has been some of that. But rather in the sense that Pittsfieldians have a long tradition of being "joiners," feeling a desire and obligation to be active in group affairs of all kinds. They are a sociable and gregarious people.

As there are over 300 clubs and organizations in the city, space permits mention of relatively few. Those included here represent major civic groups and a number of smaller associations typifying the many formed for special purposes.

### *League of Women Voters*

The League of Women Voters of Pittsfield, founded in 1931, is a non-partisan organization that works to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation in government by all citizens. A member of the Pittsfield League is automatically a member of the Massachusetts and of the national league.

Through the League's program, members work for the adoption and proper use of the most efficient and responsive forms of representative government. For each level of government, members adopt a program of current issues for concerted action.



These issues are used as a tool to stimulate thinking and promote citizen responsibility in the community.

Membership participation in the program is achieved principally through the unit discussion system. Several small discussion groups are held in different parts of the city at approximately the same time. Each group discusses the same issue, and each group meets about ten times a year. In this way, every individual has the opportunity to clarify and express her opinions. At least four general membership meetings, with speakers, are held each year.

Helping individuals to be politically effective is a year-round function of the Voters Service. These functions include (1) supplying information on elections, voting procedures, qualifications of candidates, and ballot referenda; (2) urging citizens to register and to vote; and (3) and perhaps most important, holding a candidates' rally for the public. The Pittsfield League has conducted a candidates' rally every year since 1933.

The League from its inception has been an action group. League action is political action. But it is political action in the public interest, in support of selected issues, not candidates—being non-partisan.

League action includes (1) providing information, (2) building public opinion, and (3) supporting or opposing legislation. This does not limit the activity of the League to its own members. The members are constantly reaching out into the community to develop the responsibility of all citizens.

Among the local issues on which the League has taken action are these—a non-partisan charter for Pittsfield (adopted in 1932); improved low-cost housing; improvement of the Parks and Recreation Department; building of new schools; higher standards of education; salary increases for teachers, as well as for the mayor and the councilmen; cleaning up the Housatonic River; creating a county-wide United Nations Institute. In 1954, the League compiled and published a useful manual, *This is Pittsfield*, a lucid study and presentation of the city's government and the major aspects of the community and its problems.

## CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

On a state level, the local League has concerned itself with tax reforms, establishment of a merit system, improved treatment of juvenile and women offenders, support of state teachers colleges, and protection of civil rights.

On national issues, it has actively interested itself in the legal status of women, maternal and child welfare, conservation, financial policies to promote an expanding economy, and international cooperation through the United Nations, reciprocal trade agreements, and technical assistance to underdeveloped countries.

Membership in the local League increased from a small group in 1931 to 110 in 1936, and has grown to 230 in 1955. Its work is supported by membership dues and by contributions from members, friends, and public-spirited people during the annual finance drive. Mrs. Bernard D. Cook was president in 1955.

### *Women's Club*

The Women's Club of Pittsfield, Inc., was chartered in 1954, having at the time almost 800 members, Mrs. Mary Leonard Smith was president, Miss S. Frances Gannon, executive secretary, and Mrs. Mary E. McLaughlin, treasurer. Governed by an executive board of twenty-two members, the club is an amalgam of earlier organizations.

In 1915 there were two women's clubs in Pittsfield—the Working Girls' Club (founded in 1890), with Miss Ara M. West (Mrs. Harold D. Grinnell) as president, and the Business Women's Club (established in 1909), with Dr. Mary Anna Wood as president. A person interested in helping the clubs to become firmly established provided a fund administered by the Young Women's Home Association, Inc. (a holding corporation organized in 1910). For a time, the donor was known only to the Young Women's Home Association. Upon the death of Mrs. Almira Cooley, however, it became known that she had been the generous benefactor.

Mrs. Cooley's son, Arthur, carried on his mother's work. He suggested that both clubs occupy the same quarters in the Park



Building on Bank Row, which was arranged. Additional space was obtained along Bank Row in the Wood Block. Funds for rental of these quarters was supplied by the Young Women's Home Association. Classes in cooking, dancing, and gymnastics were established. Each club had its own charter, officers, business meetings, and living room. All other privileges were enjoyed by both clubs.

Upon the death of Arthur N. Cooley, financial aid from this source was discontinued, so that in 1925 the clubs decided to operate independently of each other. The Working Girls' Club disbanded and became the Young Women's Club, with Mrs. R. H. Gamwell as president, occupying rooms in the Wood Block. The Business Women's Club continued as before and rented two front rooms in the Park Building from the Pittsfield Coal Gas Company, engaging Miss Mary Quirk as executive secretary. The membership then was about 400.

Arthur Cooley had bequeathed money to build a club house for the women of Pittsfield. From this fund the Young Women's Home Association purchased the Jones property at the corner of First and East streets. The old house on the property was fitted up for the use of the Girls' League (established in 1913), and plans were drawn up for a new building to be occupied jointly by both clubs and the Girls' League.

The onset of the Depression in the 1930s delayed these plans. Resigning as president of the Women's Club, Dr. Mary Anna Wood was succeeded by Miss Anna Solon. In 1930, Miss Maud Richardson, who had served voluntarily for seven years, was engaged as the paid treasurer of the club, filling this office until her retirement in 1953.

In June 1930, the Young Women's Club and the Business Women's Club decided to merge as the Women's Club of Pittsfield. The new club continued to use the combined rooms in both the Wood and Park buildings, which were redecorated and refurnished. Funds for this purpose were raised by rummage sales, card parties, luncheons, an art exchange, and similar activities.

## CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

During the Depression, suppers were furnished to store clerks who had to work at night, especially during the holiday season. A younger set was organized, consisting of girls aged eighteen or more who had been unable to obtain employment after leaving school. These girls, as well as adult members unable to pay dues because of lack of work, were encouraged to use the club's facilities and classes without charge until such time as they found jobs.

At the time of the merger, each club had a summer camp. The Young Women's Club had been given Francis Island at Pontoosuc Lake, donated by the Francis family. The Business Women's Club had Camp Bluebird on Richmond Pond, with 62 acres of land, a house, and other buildings, a gift from Miss Gertrude Watson. These camps are still used and enjoyed by the members and by the general public as well.

After fifteen years of service, Miss Anna Solon resigned as president and was succeeded by Mrs. Herman S. Braun, who was in turn succeeded in 1952 by Mrs. Mary Leonard Smith, the present head of the Women's Club.

Previously, in 1937, Simon England had bought a spacious brick house at 42 Wendell Avenue, owned by Mayor Allen H. Bagg, and presented it to the club in memory of his wife, Frances S. England, long active in supporting women's programs in Pittsfield. Some construction and many improvements were needed to make it suitable for use as a clubhouse. More furniture was required. Substantial contributions to this expense came from the Young Women's Home Association.

In September 1937, after twenty-eight years in crowded rooms, the club moved into its new quarters, celebrating the occasion with a banquet at which Miss Anna Solon presided and Simon England was the guest of honor.

With the new clubhouse and expanded programs, membership rose to its highest peak, more than 1,000 members. Open seven days a week and in constant use at all times, the clubhouse was proof that such quarters of their own were what the women of Pittsfield sorely needed. At his death Simon England bequeathed \$10,000 to the club with the proviso that a note held



by the bank be paid in full and that the remainder be used for any major repairs the clubhouse needed. In 1937, the Women's Club was accepted by the Community Chest as one of its Red Feather agencies.

As in World War I, so in World War II, the Women's Club bustled with activity in Red Cross and other programs, the members making bandages, knitting, sewing, promoting war gardens, selling war bonds, doing canteen work, serving as Gray Ladies and nurses' aides.

Fourteen members joined the armed forces. In 1943, Executive Secretary Mary Quirk took a year's leave of absence to work with the Red Cross in Washington. Resigning after the war, she was succeeded by Miss Martha Hick, who served until 1949 when she became Mrs. Alexander J. Young. The present Executive Secretary, Miss S. Frances Gannon, an active board member, was then appointed. The club owes its well kept records largely to the conscientious efforts of Mrs. Carolyn R. Stickles, who served as clerk for twenty-eight years.

Receiving about a fifth of its income from the Community Chest, the Women's Club is largely self-supporting through membership dues and various activities to raise money. Open every day from nine in the morning till ten at night (and later, if specially arranged), the club has kept its original policy of being a community center for all women and girls over seventeen desiring to join for educational, recreational, social, and civic activities. Among the many community projects in which the Women's Club participates is the sponsorship each year of the drive for funds for the Berkshire Benevolent Association for the Blind of Pittsfield and Berkshire County.

Community Chest organizations are granted the free use of the club for their meetings. Rooms are rented to a number of societies and for many private parties, showers, receptions, and similar gatherings, the rentals providing a not inconsiderable source of income.

## CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

### *Golden Age Club*

The Pittsfield Golden Age Club was organized in 1949 through the efforts of the Pittsfield College Club and the Department of Parks and Recreation. The club's founding owes much to Walfrid T. Victoreen, retired director of manual training in the public schools, who recognized the need for an older citizens' group and vigorously promoted its formation. With an attendance of 69 at the first meeting, the membership steadily increased until by 1954 it exceeded 600.

Each week, representatives of the College Club and the Department of Parks and Recreation attend meetings to assist however they can. There are no dues or fees. Any Pittsfield resident 65 years of age is eligible. Membership is limited to city residents because the municipal government annually appropriates, through the Parks and Recreation Department, some money for supplies, materials, and bus trips.

The club meets regularly at the YMCA for varied programs of community singing, movies, dancing exhibitions, music, plays, contests, speakers on many subjects, round and square dancing, and hobby shows. The average attendance is two hundred or more.

A local bakery donates each week a birthday cake to be presented at the meeting. Another bakery presents appropriately decorated cakes to couples celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary. Others have donated cakes and cookies for refreshments.

Many Pittsfield merchants and individuals have been generous in giving prizes for card parties and contests, and money to equip a woodworking shop with power and hand tools. The workroom, in the basement of the Berkshire Museum, can be used by members at any time.

The Golden Age Club has several group projects. On Friday afternoons, the Sewing Club meets at the Museum. With material purchased from Golden Age Club funds, articles are made for the New England Home for Little Wanderers and the City Infirmary. In addition, the Sewing Club has undertaken community projects such as making flags for the grade school safety



patrols, Red Cross banners, and costumes for the City Ice Revue. Another group meets weekly during the fall and winter for book reviews, travel talks, discussions, and hobby displays.

Requests for part-time help in such jobs as baby-sitting, gardening, and repairing are cleared through the club's own "employment bureau." Members have been serving on jury duty, working at winter sports areas, acting as judges at playgrounds, assisting in the local hospitals, and serving at the local Day Care Center as carpenters, artists, and general maintenance help.

The club has its own "girls' choir" and "boys' choir", both very popular groups not only at Golden Age Club meetings, but at gatherings of other organizations—some as far away as Cummington and Springfield.

The Golden Age Club orchestra, consisting of violin, flute or guitar, trumpet, and accordion, plays at the club's meetings and is in demand for Grange and other entertainments. Original plays, written by members, have been presented at meetings and repeated by request before other organizations.

Bus trips are most popular and are free to all members. A destination with a dance floor is usually chosen. College Club members, the Parks Department Supervisor of Recreation, and a volunteer nurse accompany all trips to assist where needed.

The Golden Age Club has been the place where old friendships have been renewed, new friends made, old talents reborn, new talents developed, loneliness dispelled, and a zest for living during the "golden years" awakened. In 1955 George J. Gottsche was club president.

## YMCA

The Pittsfield YMCA was chartered in 1886. Edward N. Huntress was the first general secretary. On his retirement in 1926, he was succeeded by Arthur B. Nicholls, who served until the appointment in 1938 of Elliott M. Preble, the present executive. Harold D. Barnes was president in 1955.

The purpose of the Association, which is part of a worldwide fellowship, is to develop Christian character and leader-

ship among young people by the practical application of Christ's teachings in spiritual, mental, social, and physical activities, while fully recognizing and treating with honor the teachings of the churches of their choice.

The major policy change in recent years has been the provision of services for women and girls. While the Association has tried to meet developing needs, it has never aggressively promoted the enrollment of women and girls. In 1953, the YMCA building was modernized at a cost of \$300,000. The present membership is 1,960, compared with 1,548 in 1915.

Summer vacation and waterfront facilities are provided at Camp Merrill for adults and Camp Sumner for boys, both located at Pontoosuc Lake. The adult camp was established in 1904; the children's, in 1924.

### *Boys' Club*

In 1950, the Boys' Club of Pittsfield celebrated the 50th anniversary of its founding. It had been established largely through the interest and financial support of Zenas Crane of Dalton. The club opened in a single room in the Renne Building on Fenn Street, with Prentice A. Jordan as superintendent. The room accommodated about seventy boys, and was supplied with a small library and a variety of table games. The first president of the board of directors was William C. Stevenson.

A few months after its founding, the club took additional rooms in the Renne Building, one being equipped as a gymnasium. Bathing facilities were added. Soon, a class in manual training was started, a penny savings bank was established, a cobbling outfit was provided to teach boys to repair their own shoes, a class in mechanical drawing was formed, a boys' orchestra was organized, and basketball games and other athletic events were arranged among the various teams in the club. A summer camp was conducted near Richmond Pond.

Membership in the club increased rapidly to 800 or more, which necessitated larger quarters. These were provided through the generosity of Zenas Crane, who built for the club its present quarters on Melville Street, dedicated in 1906. The



club continued to grow so rapidly that in 1910 the three-storied building had to be enlarged by adding a gymnasium at the rear.

Funds bequeathed by Franklin W. Russell enabled the club to purchase, as part of its expansion program, two farms and a shore front on Richmond Pond and to erect there a cottage camp for summer use. It has been developed into the pleasant and useful facility known as Camp Franklin W. Russell.

As the club continued to grow, it became apparent to Zenas Marshall Crane, son of the Boys' Club's original sponsor and benefactor, Zenas Crane, that more space was needed. In consequence, the younger Crane in 1927 gave \$150,000 to renovate the club building and build an addition to include a new auditorium, a swimming pool, new locker and shower and dressing rooms, and showers for girls and women.

Membership in the Boys' Club has grown to 2,400. The club's widely diversified program includes classes in woodworking, electricity, sheet metal work, typewriting, oil painting, and aircraft. It has a well stocked library. Recreationally, it offers a game room, an auditorium, a gymnasium, two basketball courts, a large swimming pool with all facilities, and 190 acres of summer vacation land at Camp Russell.

Recently, an Alumni Association of the Boys' Club has been formed and has assisted greatly in promoting the club's projects. Resigning as superintendent in 1920, Prentice A. Jordan was succeeded by James E. Keegan, who retired in 1951, when his post was taken by the present incumbent, Fred S. Fahey. The president of the board of directors in 1955 was William F. Retallick.

### *Girls' Club*

The Pittsfield Girls' Club was organized in 1913 as the Girls' League Association. It grew out of the activities of the Working Girls' Club and the Business Women's Club, which had separate club rooms in the Park Building on Bank Row but jointly used a dining room, a kitchen where cooking classes were conducted, and a gymnasium with a physical director in charge.

These activities were made possible by the generosity of Mrs.

## CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Almira Cooley, who in 1910 was instrumental in forming the Young Women's Home Association for the purpose of providing more adequate facilities for women's leisure time activities. After Mrs. Cooley's death in 1912, the purpose of the Home Association was forwarded by her son, Arthur N. Cooley, known for years only as "the unknown benefactor."

Since the programs for young women were so popular and successful, it was suggested that classes might be organized for school girls. This was tried experimentally with good results, and out of this came the Girls' League Association, which was organized to furnish instruction in all proper subjects "except religion," to encourage all legitimate forms of pleasure and recreation, and to provide rooms, equipment, facilities, and instructors "for the girls of Pittsfield and its immediate vicinity under 16 years of age."

This program was ably developed by the organization's first executive secretary, Miss Gertrude A. J. Peaslee. Some 330 girls from eleven schools enrolled in the program which included gymnastics, classes in raffia and reed crafts and crocheting. Miss Peaslee organized the Camp Fire Girls in Pittsfield in 1913, and added the program to the League's activities. Enrollment grew rapidly, taxing the limited facilities in the Park Building.

To help relieve the pressure, the Home Association donated funds to start cooking classes in the public schools. In 1922, through the Home Association, the "unknown benefactor" provided the League with quarters of its own, buying a house at the corner of East and Willis streets. The house was remodeled and a gymnasium added on its west side. A year after the League had moved into its new home, the identity of its benefactor became known, with the death of Arthur N. Cooley.

The League became a charter member of the Community Fund Association, and an item of \$10,000 for the League was included in the first Community Fund campaign. The League's program steadily expanded until the girls could enjoy basketball, tap dancing, pop-nights, dramatics, masquerade parties, story telling, Christmas and other parties, social dancing for



girls and later for boys and girls, tennis, archery, soccer, baseball, posture contests, athletic meets, basketry, lamp-shade making, and other handicrafts. Swimming classes were conducted in the Boys' Club pool.

From 1921 to 1928, through the courtesy of Miss Gertrude Watson and the Women's Club, the Camp Fire Girls used the facilities of Camp Witawentin on Richmond Pond. Needing a larger camp, the Girls' League and the Camp Fire Girls of Pittsfield and Dalton raised almost \$53,000 by popular subscription to supply the need.

A fine camp site of 85 acres, with 1,800 feet of shore front, was purchased on the west side of Onota Lake. A road, bridges, and camp buildings were constructed; electric power, telephone, and city water were installed. New Camp Witawentin opened in the summer of 1929, for the use of all Pittsfield and Dalton girls of Camp Fire age.

In 1936, after 23 years of service, Miss Peaslee resigned as executive secretary, being succeeded by Miss Sophie T. Fishback, of Cleveland. The latter added more opportunities and attractions for high school girls—a game room, open house for boys and girls on Saturday nights, a "charm school," and dances every other Friday night.

Resigning in 1942, Miss Fishback was succeeded by one of her staff, Miss Edith de Bonis, who led the League successfully through the difficult war years with their many shortages of essential materials and equipment. More and more use was made of the League's facilities. Total attendance during 1945 exceeded 57,000. At this time, a new project, "Teenerie," was organized by a committee of adults and representatives of the 9th grade in each of the junior high schools. In 1946, the League was host to the first national conference of Girls' Clubs of America, organized at Springfield the previous year. More than a hundred delegates attended.

The Junior League subsidized in 1948 a survey of leisure time activities available to girls and young women. The survey, sponsored by Community Chests and Councils and conducted by Sidney B. Markey, revealed that more than twice as much

## CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

was spent to provide facilities and programs for boys and men as for girls and women.

Camp Witawentin unfortunately had to be closed late in the spring of 1945 when a water shortage forced the city to pump an additional supply out of the lake. The State Board of Health thereupon closed the lake for public use. The Women's Club made available to the Girls' Club a site on its property beside Richmond Pond, where day camps were established for six weeks each summer for five years. A Home Vacation Camp for six weeks was also established at headquarters in Pittsfield, and provided recreational and other activities for girls who could not go to camp.

In 1950, Camp Witawentin on Onota Lake was reopened, being reorganized and rehabilitated under the direction of Fred Dubois in consultation with representatives of the Girls' Club, Girl Scouts, Pittsfield and Dalton Camp Fire, Jewish Community Center, and the local Kiwanis Club, which has assumed sponsorship of the project. Miss Margaret M. Noble was named director.

Since 1944, when Miss de Bonis resigned, the executive secretaries of the Girls' Club have been Mrs. Orin P. McCarty, Miss Betty E. Kingsley, and Miss Noble. The president in 1955 was Mrs. David K. Spofford.

Early in 1955, with the slogan that "Girls are important, too," the Pittsfield Girls' Building Fund drive got under way to raise \$350,000 to provide a new girls' center and an adequate Girl Scout day camp on Richmond Pond. The drive was conducted by a committee representing the Community Chest and Council, the Girls' Club, the Berkshire Hills Girl Scout Council, and the Camp Fire Girls' Council. The goal of the drive was greatly exceeded, going more than \$86,000 over the top, to a total of \$436,491. A new modern structure for the Girls' Club has been designed, which will also provide offices for the Girl Scouts and the Camp Fire Girls.

### *Boy Scouts*

Under its original name of Berkshire County Council, the local unit of the Boy Scouts of America was organized in Pitts-



field in 1916, with Frank E. Peirson as first president. Having a budget of \$1,955 in 1916, the Council numbered 12 troops and 208 boy members. Ten years later, the budget had increased to \$11,000 for 30 units and 671 boy members. The Council was over \$7,000 in debt at this time. In 1946, the Council budget had risen to \$21,000, with 76 units and 1,695 boy members. The present enrollment is 3,325 boy members in 113 units, with a budget of \$38,000.

George P. Goodrich was the first professional scout executive, followed by Joseph B. Owen, Larry E. Soars, George F. Morton, Perry S. S. Jackson, Russell G. Exley, and the present director, William D. Dyer. Burton H. Morrell was president in 1955.

Over the years the Council has operated several summer camps for its membership. The first was Camp Peirson on Richmond Pond. Later, the Council secured Camp Sunrise on Big Pond in Otis. Several other sites were tried but found inadequate. Finally, in 1944, the Council, on a long term lease from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, secured the site of its present Camp Eagle on October Mountain in Washington. W. Bradford West and Monroe B. England were active in the original Camp Eagle planning and development. The Council has an investment in camp facilities of \$50,000. Expansion is continuing as needs increase.

The purpose of Berkshire Council is to promote, supervise, and administer the educational and recreational program of the Boy Scouts of America for character development, citizenship training, and physical fitness of the boys of Berkshire County. The Council is responsible for recruiting and training qualified leaders, maintaining standards of the Boy Scout movement, and making its facilities available to all boys of Berkshire County.

### *Girl Scouts*

Girl scouting in Pittsfield owes its origin in 1918 to the Reverend Clarence H. Perry of the Immanuel Community Church. Realizing the need for scouting activities for girls, he inspired Mrs. Nelson P. Musgrove to found a troop at the Neighbor-

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hood Center. This group, known as Troop 1, started with eight girls.

By 1931, there were three troops, meeting at St. Stephen's Church, the Elm Street Chapel, and the First Methodist Church. The combined membership was 125. In this year, a community committee for the Girl Scouts was organized as prescribed by national headquarters. Constitution and by-laws were adopted in 1932, and the professional services of national headquarters became available for assistance in all phases of the local program. With this help, more leaders were obtained and the number of troops increased. By 1936, there were 14 troops, including the first Brownie troop of 15 girls aged seven to ten. Membership had risen to 210.

In 1934, troop leaders organized as the Leaders' Association for the purpose of training and to exchange program ideas with a view to better scouting. To insure the best leadership, a training course for all leaders became compulsory in 1936. An executive committee of men and women interested in furthering Girl Scout activities was established in 1937.

With increasing enrollment, the need for a paid director and a central headquarters became acute. Office space on North Street was provided by Simon England in 1939, and in 1942 a full time executive director, Miss Gladys A. Wetherell, was installed. Requirements for membership in the Community Fund were met in the same year. Greater community participation was achieved in 1949 by the establishment of an association council of elected officers and chairmen from a slate presented by a standing nominating committee, members at large, and representatives from the Leaders' Association.

After thorough study by an area development committee headed by Mrs. Eugene O. Brielman, a county organization was formed in 1952 to unite and make more effective the work of all troops. Incorporated with approval of Girl Scout national headquarters, the agency is known as Berkshire Hills Council of Girl Scouts. The area includes Pittsfield, Lee, Stockbridge, Sheffield, Lenox, and Great Barrington, with Mrs. Homer C. Earll of Lee as field director.



Camping is an integral part of Girl Scouting. Since 1933, when the Boy Scout camp in Otis was loaned for two weeks in August, local troops have camped at various sites, including Lake Ashmere and Camp Marion White at Richmond Pond, opened in 1939. Following the use of several temporary locations, in 1950 the Girl Scouts joined with the Camp Fire Girls, Jewish Community Center, and the Girls' League for regular summer camping at Camp Witawentin on Onota Lake. Owned by the Girls' League, the long unused camp was rehabilitated as a community project of the Kiwanis Club. Land for a permanent camp at Richmond Pond was purchased from the Women's Club in 1953.

Service to others is the keynote of scouting and the local council emphasizes cooperation in a wide range of useful activities, such as work as hospital aides, getting out the vote, baby sitting for women voters, civil defense, carol singing, story telling at the public library, clerical work for the Red Cross and Community Council, Red Feather campaign assistance, and knitting for veterans' hospitals. Present county enrollment totals 1,975 girls between the ages of 7 and 18, and 415 adults, including board and committee members and leaders.

The executive directors have been Miss Gladys A. Wetherell, Miss Marion B. Ochampaugh, Miss Adelaide R. Carter, and Mrs. Edward B. Calkins, the present administrator. Mrs. Donald G. MacDonald is president.

### *Camp Fire Girls*

The Pittsfield Council of Camp Fire Girls was established in 1913, three years after the founding of the national organization by Dr. Luther C. Gulick. Miss Gertrude A. J. Peaslee, who for many years served as chief guardian, was the local founder. The organization was sponsored by the Girls' League, with Dr. Mary Anna Wood as chief adviser. The program at that time was closely related to the Girls' League and was based on the platform of the Camp Fire Girls "to perpetuate the spiritual ideals of the home" and "to stimulate and aid in the formation of habits making for health and character."

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The organization for many years had no paid executive, so that records of its early history are scanty. But the association was always active in community affairs, with girls participating in Community Chest drives, clean-up campaigns, and city-wide Christmas caroling for the benefit of hospital patients and shut-ins.

The organization became a member of the Community Chest in 1952 and received its first budget allocation of \$1,477 that year. Its headquarters, originally in the Girls' League building, were later moved to 22 Pearl Street, and in 1955 to the Red Feather House at 54 Wendell Avenue.

In 1955, the Camp Fire Girls engaged a full-time executive, Mrs. Roberta Moody, to consolidate present membership, strengthen the program, and extend services to more girls. Five groups have been added in outlying areas; services to girls in low income groups have been doubled. There are approximately 200 Camp Fire Girls registered and meeting weekly in the homes of their leaders. The 1955 president was Mrs. James P. McGurk.

Each year the Council has a candy sale to supplement its U.C.S. allocation for operating expenses. By selling candy from door to door, the girls earn a nickel a box for their group and help the Council to balance its budget. At the same time they acquire skill in handling money and an appreciation of financial aspects of their program.

Emphasis upon outdoor activities has become increasingly important each year, with groups holding three council-wide outdoor gatherings annually. Individual outings with leaders are held at least once a month. In 1955 Dr. George M. Shipton received the Luther C. Gulick award, highest honor of the National Camp Fire Girls, in recognition of his 20 years of service to the local organization.

### *FMTA, FMCYC*

Reflecting local sympathy for the national temperance movement, the Father Mathew Total Abstinence Society began in 1877. The organization traces its founding to the Pittsfield Cath-



olic Total Abstinence and Benevolent Society, established in 1874. Its purpose was to provide programs for adults which would further the cause and aims of temperance. It progressed through the years with this goal until 1952, when, through the influence of the Right Reverend Eugene F. Marshall, the Reverend John J. Murphy, and John L. Quinlan, the society changed its objective and became the Father Mathew Catholic Youth Center. In 1955, the president was David I. Sweeney, with Thomas A. Duane as executive director. FMCYC has headquarters on Melville Street in a building completed in 1913.

The Center aims to provide children with wholesome recreational activity based on group work practice and stressing the idea that the individual, to develop fully, must give to the program as much as possible. From a membership of 550 children in the beginning, enrollment has grown to some 2,000.

### *College Club*

The Pittsfield College Club was founded in the summer of 1915. Its purpose was "to develop the result of women's collegiate education into a force of practical value to the community, and to maintain a spirit of fellowship among the members." Two of the women most active in forming the group were Mrs. Louis F. Blume (now Mrs. Albert Willie) and Miss Ruth A. Mills. The latter was the first president of the club, and many of its early meetings were held in her home.

At the first meeting in July 1915, 43 members were accepted, representing 18 colleges. Active membership requires a degree from an accredited college; associate membership requires one or two years of college study. Acceptance into membership is by the unanimous vote of the club. Honorary membership is also provided. At present Mrs. Mary Schumann Hayes of Pittsfield, writer of novels and short stories, is the only honorary member. The club now has a membership of almost 300, with 136 colleges represented. The president is Mrs. Edward L. Raab.

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At first, meetings were held in the homes of members; all programs were furnished by the hostesses. Miss Eleanor McCormick and her sisters were responsible for many of the music programs. Other members wrote skits and plays of merit. The club early set up four standing committees—membership, social, literary, and social service—and still works largely in these channels.

By 1925, larger quarters were needed. Meetings have since been held in the South Street Inn, the ballroom of the White Tree Inn, the Women's Club, the Wendell-Sheraton Hotel, and the Berkshire Museum.

From its founding, the club has been instrumental in making college education possible for others through its scholarship fund. The first scholarship was for \$100, given to a girl chosen on the basis of need and ability. Now the club offers two scholarships of \$250 each. A midsummer dance and special programs provide the money for these larger grants.

During World War II, the club purchased war bonds. Its members assisted in the rationing offices, at the warning center, and in the home nursing courses. It contributed money for kits for women in the bombed areas of England and contributed to the Community Fund.

As has long been its practice, the club assists in many community activities, such as the Community Chest campaigns, the hospital bazaars, and the Sale for the Blind. It provided and equipped a gift cart for Hillcrest Hospital. With the city Parks and Recreation Department, the club organized the Golden Age Club in 1949 and works actively with that group. In 1951, the College Club was invited to join the Community Council.

For several years a Toy Tea was held in December, the members bringing their small children who gave toys for the Day Care Center, the Christian Center, and the children's wards of the hospitals. These teas were discontinued, due to the work of the *Eagle's* Toy Fund. They were replaced by a tea held for girls home from college for the holidays.



The "spirit of fellowship among the members" has been promoted by meetings of the social group. These were first held in the afternoon at the homes of members. Now a similar group meets in the evening. The literary group has been responsible for many interesting discussions of its own and for arranging excellent programs for public meetings and lectures. These programs have brought many prominent speakers to Pittsfield—among them, Eleanor Roosevelt, Mary Beard, Franklin P. Adams, Carl Carmer, Bertita Harding, Ted Shawn, Walter Prichard Eaton, Walter Duranty, and Dr. Millicent C. McIntosh. Recognizing the increasingly broad interests of its members, the club has added to its original groups new ones in child guidance, music appreciation, and handcraft.

### *Junior League*

The Junior League of Pittsfield, founded in 1930, grew out of a group organized by Mrs. Lucy W. Dodge and Mrs. Brace W. Paddock to do sewing for the House of Mercy. In 1932, with Mrs. Henry D. Brigham as president, it became affiliated with the Association of Junior Leagues of America.

During the Depression, the Junior League helped to relieve the needy by establishing a Milk Fund, a Community Clothes Cupboard, the Children's Dental Health Clinic, raising funds for these and other purposes principally through an annual ball. The Junior League Ball has long been one of the highlights of the city's social season. The League joined the Council of Social Agencies and the Social Service Index, and was given the use of a room for its activities by the Berkshire Life Insurance Company.

During the late 1930s, the League sponsored art and handicraft exhibits, concerts, lectures, and plays for both adults and children. It organized a Scribblers Club and gave to the Berkshire Museum a music record library to make symphonic recordings available to the public. Later, the League gave \$1,000 to the Berkshire Athenaeum to erect and equip a sound-proof booth to aid the program, and the Record Lending Library was removed to the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Music Room in

the Athenaeum in 1939. Growing rapidly in size and community interest, the Record Lending Library soon became self-sustaining and the Athenaeum assumed complete control of it.

During World War II, the members of the League performed many services in the air alert system, in promoting war bond drives, and in meeting community needs in various ways. The League's annual ball in 1945 was the largest since the beginning of the war, netting \$1,300 for the Welfare Fund. The Children's Dental Health Clinic, the League's major project for many years, was transferred in 1947 to the city Health Department. In the later 1940s, the League financed a project sponsored by the Council of Social Agencies—a survey of the recreational activities for the girls and young women of Pittsfield.

Backed by the Berkshire County Radio Education Council and with the cooperation of the School Department and the Athenaeum, an in-school radio program entitled "Books Bring Adventure" was sponsored for some 10,000 children through the facilities of Station WBRK in Pittsfield and WKOB in North Adams. Radio became a major project with the presentation of three programs—"Books Bring Adventure," for the elementary and junior high schools; "Story Time," for the primary grades; and "History in the Making," for junior and senior high school students. In cooperation with the Berkshire Museum, a monthly Art Hour was presented over radio.

As an innovation, the League brought to the Berkshires a puppet show for ten performances—six in Pittsfield, sponsored with the Teachers Association, and four in neighboring communities, sponsored by local organizations. At the request of the Parks Department, the organization financed a demonstration to prove the need of playground supervision during the spring and fall seasons.

In 1950, the League established a Thrift Shop, with the purpose not only of raising money but of being of service to the community. The profits from the Thrift Shop during the first year amounted to \$2,300, which enabled the League to meet its pledge of \$2,500 for support of the Riggs Clinic.



The art classes at the Berkshire Museum long sponsored by the League were taken over by the Museum Auxiliary in 1951, though the League continued to pay the instructor's salary. Art classes were established at the Girls' Club, with League members volunteering their services.

During the early 1950s, money was contributed to the Museum for art books, to the Day Nursery for cots and toys, to the Riggs Clinic for painting and decorating, and to the Girls' Club for kitchen equipment. On the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the Junior League, the organization took the lead in a drive to erect a new building for the Girls' Club by pledging \$5,000 for the purpose. In June 1954, in one of its biggest projects, it sponsored a five-day performance of "The Fourposter" at the Berkshire Playhouse in Stockbridge, which brought in more than \$5,000 for the building fund of the Girls' Club. Proceeds from a young people's concert by the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra were donated to the scholarship fund of the Community Music School. Pre-concert study was arranged with the music department of the city schools.

Since its founding, Junior League members have performed regular volunteer service for many agencies in the community—among others, the Day Nursery, Girl Scouts, Pittsfield General Hospital, Social Service Index, New England Home, Boys' Club, Girls' Club, Visiting Nurse Association, Community Chest, School for Crippled Children, and the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Mrs. Edward H. Cumpston, Jr., was president in 1955.

### *Rotary*

The oldest of the business and professional men's service clubs in the city is Rotary, organized in 1920 with H. Calvin Ford as president. The club has increased from 25 charter members to its present enrollment of 130. The organization's first "clam bake" was held in Bryce Grove on Onota Lake in 1920. In 1922, local Rotary sponsored the formation of a club in North Adams. In the same year, to relieve distress during the depression following World War I, the club purchased 40 tons

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of coal for \$640 and distributed it in half-ton lots to 80 needy families in the community as a Christmas gift.

In the next years, to raise funds for civic purposes, Rotary staged two minstrel shows, with almost all members participating. There were parades before the shows, and every member not in the parade and without a reasonable excuse for absence was fined \$10. The shows, held in the Colonial Theatre, were very successful.

Among speakers at Rotary meetings at this time was Sir Harry Lauder, the famed Scottish comedian and a fellow Rotarian. In 1927, Rabbi Stephen Wise addressed the club on "The Best and Worst in American Life." It was, according to club records, "one of the best and ablest talks any Pittsfield audience had ever been privileged to hear."

At the spring conference at Springfield in 1927, a local Rotarian, Allen H. Bagg, soon to be mayor for the second time, was nominated as district governor. The following year, two sons of Pittsfield Rotarians were chosen by lot to be sent on a trip to Norway and Sweden. The lucky ones were John Curtis and Roger Nicholls. In 1930, the club financed a European trip for Frank R. Magner, son of another local Rotarian.

In 1928, at the invitation of the local club, the founder of Rotary, Paul Harris, addressed a joint meeting of the Berkshire County clubs in Pittsfield. Previously, in 1922, a Boys' Band had been organized, helped by a \$1,500 contribution from local Rotary. This project was carried on to the fall of 1927 when the band was taken over by the Pittsfield School Department, becoming the forerunner of the Pittsfield High School Band. Rotary presented the High School Band in 1939 with \$500 for the purchase of new uniforms.

Since its founding, local Rotary has operated a Students' Loan Fund, has sent many to the summer camp of the Boys' Club, given Christmas parties, supported the Boy Scouts, contributed to 4-H programs, helped the School for Crippled Children, aided activities for girls, and donated sizeable sums to local hospitals. It has established a revolving fund of \$1,000 at both the Bishop Memorial Training School for Nurses and



at St. Luke's nursing training school. In 1955, it contributed \$5,000 to the building fund of the Girls' Club.

Rotary meets weekly for business and pleasure. "One of the most enjoyable meetings of Rotary that I ever attended," writes Earl J. Bemiss, one of its historians, "was our first May trout breakfast in 1937.

"It was high-lighted by a discussion between Fred Retallick and Bill Butler, regarding the relative merits of worm dragging and fly fishing. I assure you they both stretched the truth, and did not stick to the facts.

"The trout, however, were excellent, supposedly caught by the speakers—but, in reality, purchased from the Berkshire Fish Company."

### *Kiwanis*

The local Kiwanis Club, one of many clubs affiliated with Kiwanis International under the motto "We Build," has been an active civic organization since its founding in 1921. It had some 25 charter members; its membership has grown to almost 120.

From the first, the club has had as its main project the aiding of underprivileged children. A small health camp on the south shore of Pontoosuc Lake was built entirely by club members. The project was later removed to larger and more modern quarters on East New Lenox Road. After many years of successful operation, the property was sold and the project abandoned.

Feeling that boys got a better break than girls from the organizations in the city, the Kiwanis Club in 1949 undertook to rehabilitate Camp Witawentin for girls at Onota Lake. The camp was badly run down because it had not been used for some years since the city had been forced to use Onota Lake as a source of water supply, causing the lake to be closed to the public.

Club members raised more than \$5,000 among themselves to start the project. Proceeds from a charity ball and donations by other organizations and by individuals brought the amount

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to more than \$14,000. Additional money raised in various ways enabled the club to repair and improve the camp and provide new facilities, including a dock for boats and canoes. In 1954, to raise funds, Kiwanis sponsored a local horse show and a flower tag day, and sold metal automobile plates inscribed "Berkshire Hills" to promote the region. Proceeds from these activities went to construct new bunk houses to take the place of tents at Camp Witawentin and to continue sponsoring a number of camperships.

### *Other Service Clubs*

In 1955 three other national organizations of service clubs for business and professional men were represented in the city—Lions, Exchange, and Optimists.

### *Stanley Club*

In the fall of 1923, a small group of employees from the Engineering and Allied Departments at the GE plant met in the company auditorium to discuss plans for organizing a club. Most active in this were Edward V. Dillon, John R. McClelland, John L. McLaughlin, Jr., Howard O. Stephens, Willard A. Delavan, and John S. Lennox. At a meeting on January 5, 1924, attended by 57, it was voted to form such a club "to promote the social and intellectual welfare of its members and thus increase the spirit of friendliness and cooperation which already exists." It was named the Stanley Club in honor of William Stanley, inventor of the transformer and builder of the first electrical works in Pittsfield, later taken over by General Electric.

Edward V. Dillon was elected the first president of the Stanley Club. Cummings C. Chesney, manager of the local GE plant, was named honorary president. In recognition of the latter's many services in the formation and growth of the club, an oil portrait of Chesney has been hung in the club house.

As the newly formed club had no quarters, the first year's activities consisted largely of dance programs held in the GE auditorium. The first annual dinner and meeting was held at



the Tally-Ho Inn in December 1924. Ivanhoe H. Sclater was elected as second president at this meeting, and mainly through his efforts the club obtained part-time use of the Shire City Club rooms on Fenn Street. Under this arrangement, activities such as bridge, dances, smokers and picnics were possible, and club membership increased at a rapid rate.

The club next leased rooms on the top floor of the City Savings Bank Building, formerly occupied by the Knights of Pythias. These more ample quarters were opened early in 1926, with more than 200 attending. This event marked the first performance of the Stanley Club Orchestra of 25 pieces, organized and directed by Howard O. Stephens.

In the new club rooms, activities expanded. Stag and mixed bridge parties, supper meetings with speakers, dances, smokers, and just plain lounging soon made the club one of the busiest and most popular gathering spots in town.

An active sports program was developed. The club entered baseball, basketball, and bowling teams in various city leagues. Inter-club sports activities were carried on with the Edison Club of Schenectady, and later expanded to include the Thomson and Patterson clubs of Lynn and Bridgeport.

From this emerged the Stanley Club Field Day, at which representatives of all four clubs participated in field and water sports. The water and field events were held at Camp Merrill on Pontoosuc Lake. Golf matches were played on courses in the area. The day closed with a supper and dance. The Field Day became a largely attended and eagerly awaited annual affair.

Winter sports, including ski and snowshoe hikes and sleigh rides, became popular at this time. A skating rink was acquired, and a hockey team organized. This rounded out a program of indoor and outdoor activities for all seasons of the year.

A glee club was formed. Under the training and direction of Howard O. Stephens, it was heard in many public concerts and presented over radio station WGY in Schenectady. Stephens also continued his work with the symphony orchestra.

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Ever increasing membership and the expanding program greatly taxed the facilities of the club rooms. A lease was obtained on rooms on the top floor of the Central Block on North Street. Architect George E. Haynes was commissioned to design and lay out suitable club rooms. The new quarters were opened in April 1931.

More activities were added to the club's program—a canoe racing club, photo club, riding club, golf, tennis teams, a summer hiking club, an active and successful hockey team, and a billiard team. A program of formal dances was also established to include the Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year and Easter holidays. A winter sports carnival also became an annual affair with participation by local and out-of-town contestants, the forerunner of the Winter Carnival now carried on annually by the Parks Department. An astronomical group was organized under Guglielmo C. Camilli, an authority on this subject and still a club member, who built the most powerful telescope in the area and gave instruction in its use.

One of the greatest civic ventures of the club, the Junior Symphony Orchestra, was sponsored in the 1930s. Alphonse J. Pelletier, an outstanding musician, was engaged to organize and direct this orchestra which was composed of children of school age who were interested in music. The club provided the musical scores and some of the larger instruments that would have entailed a large expenditure for a youngster to own. The Junior Symphony Orchestra was later heard in many concerts in town and in neighboring communities, as well as over radio station WGY in Schenectady.

In 1936, through the efforts of John O. Roser and a special committee, the club bought the Hinsdale house on Wendell Avenue just as a wrecking company was about to tear it down. The house was converted into club rooms, largely through the work of members organized in painting, wiring, carpentry, and laboring groups. The horse stalls in the large coach barn at the rear of the house were removed, providing a large auditorium there.

The Junior Symphony Orchestra continued to be the club's



outstanding activity, with the Senior Orchestra a very popular second. The latter group was expanded to include players outside the club and was directed and advised by well known musicians in the city. Among them were Ulysse A. Buhler, Jay C. Rosenfeld, and Thomas P. King. The Glee Club was enlarged to include many voices from choirs and other musical groups. Six bowling alleys were installed in the basement of the barn. A rathskellar was established in the basement of the house, with suitable bar and furniture.

With the outbreak of World War II, many club members left for the armed services. But with travel restricted by gasoline rationing, the club became a most popular spot for relaxation and relief from the pressure of the times. Its expanded facilities made the barn a desirable place to hold sizeable gatherings, including political rallies at which candidates for public office could be seen and heard.

With the end of the war, many of the men in service resumed membership, apparently content to travel at a slower pace as sports activities declined. There was greater emphasis on social events, with dances and visiting the rathskellar the most popular. The bowling alleys—the only alleys in the area offering ten-pin bowling—continued to be very popular, with many leagues filling bowling time to capacity.

Early in 1948, a fire badly damaged the barn. Reconstruction was immediately started, with Alphonse J. Marchand doing the architectural work. The barn was rebuilt with a knotty pine interior, a stage, and a kitchen. The massive beam construction of the old barn was retained.

While membership in the club continued to increase, participation in its activities started to decline. It was decided to consolidate all of its functions in one building. The house on Wendell Avenue was sold, to become the headquarters of the Red Feather agencies.

The barn behind it was enlarged and remodeled as headquarters for the Stanley Club under the direction of Marchand, who in 1954 was presented a plaque and made the only life member of the club in appreciation of his services. At the end of

1954, the club had some 850 regular and about 75 honorary (retired) members. Among the latter were many who had been members of the Stanley Club almost since the day of its founding.

### *Berkshire District Medical Society*

The Berkshire District Medical Society grew out of a petition of eight doctors of the county who in 1808 asked "leave to establish a district society in that county, to comprehend all the towns in that county." The local society began to meet regularly in 1819, as it has since continued to do.

The society was well established by January 1821, at which time the officers were Timothy Childs, president; Hugo Burghardt, vice president; Alfred Perry, secretary; Charles Worthington, treasurer and librarian. Timothy Childs, father of Henry Halsey Childs, was the leading physician in Pittsfield at the time. He had been a surgeon in Colonel Patterson's regiment during the War of Independence, a leader in introducing the practice of inoculation in Pittsfield, a member of the Commonwealth's General Court and later of its Executive Council.

The purposes of the society are to meet regularly to discuss methods of improving medical practice in the area, to present and discuss scientific papers, to keep abreast of new developments in medicine, to aid the community in controlling communicable diseases, and to represent Berkshire County at State and American Medical Society meetings.

At the present time, the main policy of the society is to co-operate with various governmental agencies—local, state, and national—to assure the best medical care to the largest number of people, while at the same time retaining the personal doctor-patient relationship, with free choice of doctor. In 1955, the Berkshire District Medical Society had almost 200 members.

### *Berkshire Bar Association*

Founded in 1870, the Berkshire Bar Association, composed of all lawyers in Berkshire County, has about 120 members. More than half of them live in Pittsfield.



For a long time, the Association's activities were mainly social or commemorative. In recent years, however, recognizing the need of keeping abreast of changes in the profession, the Association has inaugurated a program of legal education. Attorneys within and outside the Association, and other professional men, have been invited to give lectures on various phases of the law and allied topics.

One of the main problems nationally confronting the bench and the bar is congestion in the jury trial court. In this field, the Berkshire Bar Association has made an innovation that has proved helpful in the settlement of cases. Panels of conciliators named from the membership of the bar have consulted with counsel in motor vehicle tort cases, during which sessions the facts, injuries, damages, and other questions are clearly set forth. As a result, the conciliator has been able to make recommendations for the settlement of many cases without going to trial.

In 1930, the Bar Association participated in a ceremony of the Supreme Judicial Court commemorating the 100th anniversary of the appointment of Lemuel Shaw as chief justice. It welcomed Stanley E. Qua upon first sitting with the full bench in this county after his appointment as chief justice in 1947. Likewise, in September 1952, at a sitting of the full bench, it congratulated Henry T. Lummus on the twentieth anniversary of his becoming associate justice.

Several of the Association's members have been honored by appointment as judges of the various courts of the Commonwealth. John Crawford Crosby served as an associate justice of the Supreme Judicial Court from 1913 to 1937. Serving on the Superior Court as associate justices were William Adams Burns (1921—1949), and J. Arthur Baker (1937—1951). The retirement of Judge Burns in 1949 left the Association without a resident judge on the Superior or Supreme Judicial Courts for the first time since 1859.

The Probate Court was capably administered by Edward T. Slocum (1894—1924), Arthur M. Robinson (1924—1942), and F. Anthony Hanlon (1942—). The District Court of Cen-

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tral Berkshire has had two Association members serving as presiding justices—Charles L. Hibbard (1913—1947), and Charles R. Alberti (1947—).

In 1955, the Berkshire Bar Association was host for the mid-winter meeting of the Massachusetts Bar Association—the first meeting of the State Association to be held in the county in almost forty years.

### *Western District Dental Society*

Dentists of Berkshire County established the Western District Dental Society in 1895 with an initial membership of 23. Dr. William D. Hill of Great Barrington, secretary, and Dr. George M. Wentworth of Pittsfield, treasurer, were the first officers.

In 1955 the organization numbered 84 members. A component of the Massachusetts Dental Society and the American Dental Association, the society's purpose is to encourage the improvement of the health of the public and to promote the art and science of dentistry.

### *American Institute of Electrical Engineers*

The Pittsfield Section of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers was formed in 1904 with a membership of 26. Most of the members were employed by the Stanley-General Incandescent Electric Manufacturing Company, later the local works of the General Electric Company. The purpose of the AIEE is to advance the theory and practice of electrical engineering and allied arts—a purpose which has been followed in the Pittsfield Section by presenting programs of general technical interest and by sponsoring contests for the writing of papers.

A special series of public lectures, begun in 1924, provided programs of popular interest at a nominal admission charge. These lectures, particularly well patronized when travel and entertainment were restricted during World War II, continued until 1949. Technical programs are presently held each month, with paper competitions for local members and inter-section contests with Schenectady and Lynn.



Among celebrated speakers brought to Pittsfield on AIEE programs have been Charles P. Steinmetz, Robert A. Millikan, Gerard Swope, Irving Langmuir, Commander Edward Ellsberg, Floyd Bennett, Clarence S. Darrow, Raymond L. Ditmars, Senator Robert M. La Follette, and Amelia Earhart. In 1955, membership in the local group numbered 362.

*Business Men's Association, Park Club*

Filling a need for a convenient social meeting place, a club known as the Business Men's Association was founded in 1881, occupying rooms in the newly built Central Block on North Street. Membership grew rapidly from the original enrollment of 99 after the early plan of the founders for a strictly social club with "no games, no gambling, and no dogs" was gradually given a more liberal interpretation.

The name of Park Club was adopted in 1896, at which time the organization moved across the street, occupying the entire third floor of the Berkshire County Savings Bank building. In 1911, the club moved again to very ample quarters, the fifth floor of the Berkshire Life Insurance building, which was arranged especially for the club's needs. There was a restaurant and bar, reception room, reading room, a kitchen, and facilities for playing cards and billiards.

Among the more active founders were Ensign H. Kellogg, James M. Barker, and John R. Warriner, the first president. From a high of 600 in the 1920s, membership gradually dwindled as the automobile, the radio, motion pictures, and the multiplying demands of new civic activities left small time for the leisurely enjoyments of club life.

Held together for many years by the efforts of Ivanhoe H. Sclater and Walfrid T. Victoreen, the last two presidents, the Park Club officially disbanded in 1949. The club is still continued informally by a small group of long-time members who meet occasionally for social gatherings and reminiscences about the old days when the Park Club was, in the words of its founders, "a common meeting place for the members and their

## CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

friends, giving opportunity to the stranger to get a glimpse of, and welcome from, the citizens of the community.”

### *Shire City Club*

In 1910 a group of the city's younger men, sparked by Harold C. Leonard, organized the Shire City Club for social, charitable and civic activities. First occupying several rooms over Blatchford's store, they moved in 1912 to the Berkshire Life building, then for a short period over Taylor's clothing store, in 1918 to rooms over the City Savings Bank and finally to the entire second floor of the Renne building on Fenn Street.

During World War I, club members were outstanding in their support of the armed services, the *Boston Post* saying that the club had the highest percentage of enlistments of any such organization in the country, and the *Berkshire Eagle* reporting that 95 per cent of the original membership was in service.

In the early 1920s the club was the motivating force behind the Shire City Orchestra. Led by J. Stallman Taylor, the orchestra became one of the most popular dance bands in the county and surrounding area. Among its members were Ernest M. Andrews and Clifford J. Heather, who later became prominent in "big-time" bands.

The club had over 200 members at its peak, but for economic reasons it disbanded in 1926, many of the members then affiliating with the Park Club. The last reunion was held in 1934 at the Alford Brook Club, with 45 former members present.

### *Art League*

The Pittsfield Art League was born in 1923 when a small group met at the home of George A. Newman, whose wife was a painter and later president of the League. The purpose of the organization was to create a wider interest in and greater appreciation of the fine arts. The League's first president was Archibald K. Sloper.

The group arranged a show early in 1924 in a room above the Chamberlain store on South Street. Later that year, it staged its first annual exhibition, at the Berkshire Museum,



where the yearly exhibitions have since been held, usually in September.

In 1952, under the direction of its president, Mrs. Clifford G. Lloyd, the League sponsored its first annual sidewalk sale of paintings on three Saturdays during August on the lawn of the Berkshire Museum. This project has created interest in and promoted the buying of works of art. The League has 135 members.

### *Monday Evening Club*

The Monday Evening Club, organized in 1869, celebrated the 87th anniversary of its founding in November 1955. A social and literary club since its inception, it holds meetings every year from the fall to early spring for the enjoyment of its members. After each dinner meeting, a member reads a paper on a topic selected by himself, while another serves as host—assignments being rotated from year to year.

Many prominent Pittsfieldians have belonged to the club. Membership has not varied since the beginning, averaging about twenty. The present oldest member is Elmer G. Bridg-ham, retired principal of Pomeroy School.

### *Thursday Evening Club*

The Thursday Evening Club was founded in 1919 by Dr. Ralph D. Head. Of the charter members, two remain—Dr. Head and Frederick M. Myers. The group, which has some twenty members, meets twice a month from November through March in the homes of one or another of its members. At each meeting, a member reads a paper on a subject of his choice. Topics have covered a wide range of interest. As many members have been men of the General Electric Company, a great many papers have dealt with science in general and GE industrial developments in particular.

### *Wednesday Morning Club*

A distinguished Pittsfield institution for 70 years, the Wednesday Morning Club disbanded in 1949 after a notable

## CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

career in quickening the intellectual life of its members and the community. Founded in 1879 by Anna L. Dawes, daughter of U. S. Senator Henry L. Dawes of Pittsfield, the club was formed to hear prominent speakers on public affairs, international relations, and the arts, and to discuss papers on similar topics prepared by its members.

It was often said that "Miss Dawes is the Wednesday Morning Club." The statement was not greatly exaggerated. For 60 years, until her death in 1938, Anna Dawes was president of her organization, delighting the members by her learning, her wit, and her personal charm. An author and speaker of distinction, Miss Dawes enjoyed a wide acquaintance among the nation's famous men and women. During her regime, she persuaded such outstanding people as President Woodrow Wilson, Dr. Harry A. Garfield, other college presidents, numerous Cabinet members, and many prominent men of letters to address the club. Each speaker came as a personal favor to Miss Dawes, his recompense being a huge bouquet of roses presented after his talk.

At the 50th anniversary celebration in 1929, a portrait of Miss Dawes by Mrs. William Chase of Boston was given to the Berkshire Museum by Mrs. Augustus McK. Gifford, Pittsfield poetess. In 1940, the club established as a memorial the Anna L. Dawes Alcove at the Berkshire Athenaeum, devoted to books for teenagers.

For many years, meetings were held in the First Congregational Church parish house, later being transferred to the Museum. To fit the schedules of speakers, the club often met on other days than Wednesday, which led Miss Dawes to quip, "The Wednesday Morning Club is so called because it meets on Tuesdays."

Organized by 126 charter members, mainly from prominent families, the club numbered 300 when it dissolved "because it could not find a president." A casualty of the modern age of television and radio, the Wednesday Morning Club seemed to its devotees as durable a Pittsfield institution as the Soldiers'



Monument in Park Square, and the club's older members still deplore its passing.

### *Fortnightly Club*

The Fortnightly Club for women was founded early in 1897 by Mrs. Isaac C. Smart, wife of the pastor of the South Congregational Church. Its membership was not limited to parishioners of the church. The club had as its aim the discussion of current events, education, literature, history, travel, art, and music. By 1924, the club had some 235 members.

Since that time, Mrs. Albert W. Patten has been president. The speakers, musicians, and artists appearing at the club's meetings have been eminent in their respective fields. The Fortnightly Club has regularly contributed to the Red Cross, the Community Fund, the South Church, the South Church Flower Fund, the Seamen's Friend Society of Boston, and other worthy causes.

### *Knights of Columbus*

The local organization of the Knights of Columbus—Rabida Council, No. 103—was established in 1894, with William Turtle as the first Grand Knight. In the beginning, meetings were held in the Edward H. Cullen Department Store, now the Textile Store on North Street. Rooms were later acquired in the Merrill Building, known today as the Farrell Sweeney Building, on North Street. By 1917, the Council had so grown that it required more ample quarters, taking its present spacious rooms in the Lloyd Building opposite St. Joseph's Church.

During World War I, 149 members of the Council served in the armed forces; three of them lost their lives during the conflict. The order collected several thousand dollars for the War Chest under the direction of Grand Knight Robert F. Stanton.

In 1930, under the leadership of William J. Joyce, the Council itself made substantial contributions to the building of St. Luke's Hospital and persuaded the State Council to donate \$5,000 to the institution and to maintain a bed in the hospital

## CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

for use of Knights of Columbus of Berkshire County. Dr. Edward J. Callahan has long been a trustee of this fund.

Rabida Council is active in community, civic, and philanthropic causes. It has given support to the Boys' Club for work at Camp Russell, to the Father Mathew Catholic Youth Center, and to the Brightside Orphanage in Springfield.

It annually awards the St. James Memorial Medal to the outstanding student-athlete at St. Joseph's Catholic Central High School and presents medals to the foremost students of Christian doctrine in the local parochial schools. It gives cash awards annually to graduates of the Pittsfield High School and St. Joseph's High School for excellence in the study of American history.

The Bishop Conaty Fourth Degree Assembly of the Knights of Columbus, made up of members of the Berkshire County councils, was instrumental in forming the colorful Honor Guard that attends the Bishop of Springfield and other Catholic church dignitaries on their visits to Pittsfield.

### *American Legion*

Desiring to form an organization "to keep alive the principles for which they had fought," some World War I veterans called a caucus in St. Louis in May 1919. Jay C. Rosenfeld represented Pittsfield at this caucus, out of which grew the American Legion.

Soon after Rosenfeld's return home, 15 local veterans met in the State Armory and signed a petition requesting an American Legion charter. William H. Eaton was named temporary commander; and Reginald M. Ames, temporary secretary.

The charter was granted, and the first regular meeting of Pittsfield Post #68 was held in the State Armory on August 6, 1919. At this meeting, 57 new members were admitted. Membership increased rapidly during the next few years until it reached a total of approximately 600. The Post's first permanent officers were Dr. Harry J. Tate as commander; Alexander C. Jasperson, vice commander; Jay C. Rosenfeld, adjutant; and Charles F. Reid, finance officer.



The Post held its meetings in the Armory until early in 1920, when rooms were secured in the Lloyd Block on North Street, opposite St. Joseph's Church. Post headquarters remained there until 1950 when the White Tree Inn on Wendell Avenue was purchased as permanent quarters. Membership in the Post grew rapidly after World War II. In 1955, it totalled almost 1,800. From the beginning, Post #68 has been active in patriotic affairs and in sponsoring programs of value to the community.

Offshoots of the organization are the American Legion Auxiliary and the "40 & 8." The Auxiliary, made up of mothers, wives, and sisters of Post members, has been of great service to disabled veterans. The "40 & 8"—the often boisterous "playground" of the Legion—has done generous work with its child welfare program.

### *Veterans of Foreign Wars*

The Henry Trudeau Post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars has headquarters on Bradford Street. The local VFW, like the members of the Legion, interest themselves in veterans' problems and in patriotic and community affairs.

### *Vasa Order*

Ankaret Lodge #79, Vasa Order of America, was organized in Pittsfield in February 1905 by a group of 17 Swedish men and women. The Vasa Order assists its members in sickness and distress, and strives to keep alive the memory of the achievements and traditions of Sweden. The order has lodges throughout the United States, Canada, and Sweden. Membership is open to anyone of Swedish descent.

The highest membership in Ankaret Lodge was 73 in 1925. During the depression years, many of the members left Pittsfield and dropped their membership. Of the charter members, two are still living—Mr. and Mrs. Herman Miller of Troy, New York. One of the charter members was Ernst O. Engstrom, whose place of business was the Engstrom Pharmacy on North Street. Eric G. Bergstrom, who served as secretary for 18 years, organized a Swedish male chorus which sang on many occa-

## CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

sions. Three Lodge members served in World War II, as did many sons of members.

### *Syrian-Lebanese-American Club*

In 1912, a small group of immigrants from the Middle East, led by Louis Habib, formed an organization that was chartered three years later as the Syrian-American Club. In 1948 it became the Syrian-Lebanese-American Club. The organization was instrumental in founding what is now the Syrian-Lebanese-American Federation of the Eastern States. Surviving members of the original club still resident in Pittsfield are Solomon H. Haddad and William K. George. At the end of 1955, the organization had 45 members.

A group of five girls, daughters of members, formed a social and charitable order in 1930, called the Daughters of Lebanon. Their program is similar to that of the parent organization.

### *Polish Falcons*

Nest 580 of the Polish Falcons of America was founded in Pittsfield in 1914 when three young men—John Dec, John Ulma, and Witold Bylina—met at a social gathering and discovered that they had all been members of the Polish Falcons in their homeland. Deciding to organize a Falcon nest in the city, they interested eight more men in becoming charter members. Meetings were held on Sundays in a hall on Peck's Road, and on a field near Onota Lake for military drill. With membership steadily growing, the Falcons built their own quarters on Bel Air Avenue in 1916. At this time, women were first admitted to the society.

During World War I, eight local Falcons joined the Polish army of General Joseph Hallera. Many more of them served in the American armed forces. In 1921, a theatre group was organized, and proceeds from the plays that were presented went toward meeting the needs of Polish-American youth in the area.

The society became a fraternal insurance organization in 1926, having headquarters in Pittsburgh. During the 1930s, a



drum and bugle corps, and boys' and girls' basketball and baseball teams were organized. The organization celebrated its 25th anniversary in 1939 with a district convention, and a track and field meet, which attracted 6,000 people of Polish descent to the city for the occasion.

In 1940, with Alexander Szymanski as president, the Falcons doubled the capacity of their headquarters on Bel Air Avenue. The outbreak of World War II reduced the attendance at youth classes as many of the younger men joined the colors. More than fifty served in the armed forces during the conflict. As the war drew to a close, efforts were made to renew interest in youth activities. To raise funds for the purpose, the recording secretary, Mrs. Catherine Mierzejewski, initiated the project of sponsoring Saturday night public dances. They were successful and have continued, providing funds for carrying on the work of gymnasium and dance groups.

#### *Other Nationality Groups*

Other nationality groups organized in the city include the Clan MacInnes, Franco-American Club, Order of Ahepa (Greek), Portuguese-American Club, Russian Brotherhood Lodge, Sons of Italy, and Turn Verein Germania.

#### *Lakewood Civic Association*

Organized in 1947 with Gabriel Virgilio as its first president, the Lakewood Civic Association aims to promote the well-being of its neighborhood. Since its founding, the Association has been able through its own efforts and the cooperation of city and state agencies to help bring about a number of improvements—better street lighting, more traffic lights, resurfacing of many streets, improved mail service, the development of a new city park opposite Hibbard School, opening of the Hibbard School auditorium as the Hibbard Community Center, extension of sidewalks, and having the Commonwealth declare Goodrich Pond a “great pond” and open to public use.

The Association has also sponsored a Camp Fire Girls unit, teams in the Parks Department baseball leagues, softball and

## CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

basketball teams for girls, a Christmas party for children of members, and parties twice a year for members and their friends. It has entered floats in the traditional Mardi Gras, Halloween, and Fourth of July parades, winning many first prizes.

### *Jewish Community Council and Center*

The Jewish Community Council of Pittsfield, now affiliated with the National Jewish Welfare Board, the Pittsfield Community Council and the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, was founded in 1925 for the purpose of setting up facilities for a Hebrew School and an assembly hall for adults. It was first known as the Hebrew Alliance and had headquarters on Robbins Avenue.

In 1936, the Alliance was reorganized as the Jewish Community Center, under the direction of Howard Udel. Special programs for youths and adults were begun, conducted in various rented quarters because the building on Robbins Avenue had been outgrown. A rabbi was engaged to supervise the Center, instruct in the Hebrew School, and lead the Congregation Knesses Israel.

Gershon Gelbart served as the first professional director of the Jewish Community Center from 1940 to 1943, when he was succeeded by Leon Mohill, who served until 1945. Meantime, in 1944, the Center had acquired its present site at 235 East Street. The Hebrew School was moved there in 1945, and the Robbins Avenue property was sold.

In 1951, the Jewish Community Center was reorganized and its responsibilities taken over by the Jewish Community Council. In the same year, a brick structure was erected on the Coogan property on East Street. The new building housed both the Jewish Community Center and the Hebrew School. The first president of the Jewish Community Council was Dr. David B. Greengold, with Howard Udel as acting executive director. Since 1953 Herman Shukovsky has been executive director.

The purpose of the Jewish Community Center is to provide informal education and recreational, cultural, social, and athletic activities for all members of its community.



*Automobile Club of Berkshire County*

Organized in 1920 as a unit of the American Automobile Association, the Automobile Club of Berkshire County was established to promote good roads, safety, and better legislation for motorists. The first officers were W. Murray Crane, honorary president; George W. Bailey, president; Leo H. Traver, Frederick M. Myers, and James R. Savery, vice presidents; Louis A. Merchant, treasurer; Clarence J. Biladeau, executive secretary. Biladeau served until his death in 1939, being succeeded in 1940 by Eugene E. Donnelly, the present executive secretary.

The club was the first organization to attempt the task of keeping the Lebanon Mountain road open all winter, with groups of members volunteering for shoveling snow on Sundays. Instrumental in securing a local branch office of the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles, the club also aided in establishing the state police force. An important contribution to saving lives and preventing injuries was sponsorship of schoolboy safety patrols to guard children at all school crossings, a program that has continued since 1928.

A personal accident insurance policy, emergency road service, touring information, and bail bond service are available to all members. The club's 1955 enrollment was 9,000, representing 21 per cent of the registered car owners in Berkshire County—the largest percentage for any automobile club in New England.

*Country Club of Pittsfield*

Formed in 1897 by men interested in learning the then "new" game of golf, the Country Club of Pittsfield first rented sufficient land for a 9-hole course southwest of the junction of Dawes Avenue and Holmes Road. In 1899, the club bought 230 acres on lower South Street, known as the Morewood estate. On the site was located Broadhall, the mansion built by Henry Van Schaack in 1781, later the home of Elkanah Watson, Thomas Melville, and John R. Morewood. Here, in 1833, Herman Melville first knew Pittsfield when he visited his uncle, who farmed a large part of the present golf course. Broadhall

## CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

was also noted as the summer boarding house where Longfellow, Hawthorne, and Melville passed Berkshire vacations.

The golf course was expanded in 1915 to 18 holes. Sports facilities have been increased by three tennis courts and a squash doubles court, with provision for swimming, boating, and fishing at Morewood Lake. Winter sports include ice and fancy skating, and hockey. The club has a membership of 600.

### *Berkshire Hills Country Club*

The Berkshire Hills Country Club was formed late in 1924. Some of its incorporators were members of the Pittsfield Homestead Company, which had purchased hundreds of acres of land from the old Allen Farm for the purpose of encouraging new industry, the building of new homes, and a general improvement of the surrounding area. The club purchased 120 acres of land for \$25,000 from the Pittsfield Homestead Company—a tract bounded by Benedict Road and Crane Avenue, the remaining bounds to be determined by the buyer and seller. A. W. Tillinghast, noted New York golf course architect, was employed to lay out the golf course.

On this active farm land, there was no problem in raising lush turf. The big problem was in shaping the land contours to satisfactory teeing and putting surfaces. This was before the days of the bulldozer, belly loader, and other power machines and many laborious months were spent with plow, horse and scoop shovel, and hand labor before results began to be apparent.

A picturesque and practical clubhouse was completed in 1927. Members consisted of the 306 founders of the club. Tom Peters was the first golf professional and Tom Nocker, the first greenskeeper.

Golf in the first few years was somewhat sketchy. But members enjoyed what they called cross-country golf—passing those holes under construction, and playing those nearly completed—some more than once—to finish an 18-hole game. In 1928, the 18-hole course was opened and since has been a garden spot of the area.



The clubhouse burned to the ground in March 1940. To replace the old building a rambling country style house was completed by midsummer under the direction of Andrew M. Snodgrass and his building committee. During the post-war period, the clubhouse has been doubled in size and furnished modernistically, with new lockers and showers.

Additional land has been acquired. The golf course has been improved with new greens, better landscaping, tree planting and other projects. Membership totals approximately 500.

### *Pontoosuc Lake Country Club*

Before the organization of the Pontoosuc Lake Country Club in 1927, golf was played by members of the Pittsfield Boat Club on a tract of land on the west shore of Pontoosuc Lake. Freeman M. Miller of the Boat Club was the leader of the original group of golf enthusiasts. In 1921, the directors of the Boat Club bought the Hodecker tract on the west shore and organized the Pontoosuc Lake Country Club, with Gilbert M. Brewer as first president. The Pontoosuc Club's course of 18 holes has three of the longest holes (par 5) in New England.

At the time of organization the club had ten members. Present membership is about 300. The club has had the same professional since its founding—Charles D. (Chick) Moxon, now in his 36th year of service, having started as pro of the early club formed by the Boat Club group.

# Appendix

Municipal officers since Pittsfield's incorporation as a city in 1891, compiled by John J. Fitzgerald, City Clerk.

Note: The following additional lists, omitted because of space limitations, are on file at the Reference Department of the Berkshire Athenaeum:

Board of Aldermen	(1891—1933)
Common Council	(1891—1933)
City Council	(1934—1955)

## *Boards*

Assessors	(1891—1955)
Health	(1891—1933)
Overseers of the Poor	(1891—1924)
Park Commission	(1913—1955)
Public Welfare	(1925—1933)
Public Works	(1891—1933)
Registrars of Voters	(1891—1955)
School Committee	(1891—1955)

For additional names of officers not cited in the appendix or included above, the reader is referred to appropriate chapters in the history, especially Chapter XII, Government.

## MAYORS

Charles E. Hibbard	1891
Jabez L. Peck	1892—1893
John C. Crosby	1894—1895
Walter F. Hawkins	1896—1897
*William W. Whiting	1898—1899

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\*William W. Whiting died August 7, 1899. Levi A. Stevens, President of the Board of Aldermen, served as Mayor from August 8, 1899 to December 31, 1899.



## THE HISTORY OF PITTSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

Hezekiah S. Russell	1900—1901
Daniel England	1902
Harry D. Sisson	1903—1904
Allen H. Bagg	1905—1907
William H. MacInnis	1908—1910
Kelton B. Miller	1911—1912
Patrick J. Moore	1913—1914
George W. Faulkner	1915—1916
William C. Moulton	1917—1919
Louis A. Merchant	1920
Michael W. Flynn	1921—1922
Charles W. Power	1923—1924
Fred T. Francis	1925—1926
Harry G. West	1927
Jay P. Barnes	1928—1931
Patrick J. Moore	1932—1933
Allen H. Bagg	1934—1937
James Fallon	1938—1947
Robert T. Capeless	1948—1955
Harvey E. Lake	1956—

## CHIEF ENGINEERS OF THE FIRE DEPARTMENT

George W. Branch	1891—1895
William F. Francis	Jan. 20, 1896 to Dec. 27, 1906
Lucien D. Hazard	March 18, 1907 to July 1, 1911
William C. Shepard	Dec. 18, 1911 to Feb. 13, 1933
Thomas F. Burke	Feb. 13, 1933 to May 31, 1955
Ward G. Whalen	June 1, 1955—

## CHIEFS OF POLICE

John Nicholson	Mar. 4, 1891 to April 1, 1905
William G. White	April 1, 1905 to Jan. 6, 1913
Daniel P. Flynn	March 10, 1913 to May 8, 1915
John L. Sullivan	Sept. 13, 1915 to Feb. 18, 1947
Thomas H. Calnan	Feb. 26, 1947—

## APPENDIX

### CITY AUDITORS

George Y. Learned	Feb. 2, 1891 to July, 1897
G. Albert Learned	
Acting Auditor from July, 1897 to June 28, 1899	
Dennis A. Curtin	June 28, 1899 to Jan. 31, 1904
Edgar T. Lawrence	Feb. 1, 1904 to Feb. 6, 1921
Jay P. Barnes	Feb. 7, 1921 to Feb. 6, 1927
Harry C. Hutchinson	Feb. 7, 1927 to Feb. 5, 1933
Louis J. Smith	Feb. 6, 1933 to Jan. 14, 1934
Frederick H. Chant	Jan. 15, 1934 to Jan. 16, 1938
Anthony W. Sottile	Jan. 17, 1938 to March 31, 1954
John J. Norton	April 1, 1954—

### CITY CLERKS

Kelton B. Miller	Feb. 2, 1891 to April 15, 1894
Edward C. Hill	April 16, 1894 to Feb. 3, 1895
Edward B. Cain	Feb. 4, 1895 to Feb. 1, 1896
Edward C. Hill	Feb. 2, 1896 to Feb. 6, 1898
Joseph Ward Lewis	Feb. 7, 1898 to April 26, 1901
Ernest Johnson	April 27, 1901 to Feb. 3, 1902
Joseph Ward Lewis	Feb. 3, 1902 to Jan. 22, 1907
John Barker	Jan. 23, 1907 to Jan. 15, 1910
Alfred C. Daniels	Jan. 16, 1910 to Jan. 6, 1912
Norman C. Hull	Jan. 7, 1912 to Nov. 1, 1916
Miller D. Steever	Dec. 8, 1916 to Feb. 17, 1919
Lemuel G. Lloyd	Feb. 18, 1919 to Feb. 1, 1920
Michael F. Quinn	Feb. 2, 1920 to Sept. 23, 1925
James F. Woods	Jan. 4, 1926 to Feb. 3, 1929
Harold F. Goggins	Feb. 4, 1929 to July 5, 1943
(Harold F. Goggins was on leave of absence and John J. Fitzgerald served as temporary City Clerk from August 1, 1942 to December 31, 1942).	
John J. Fitzgerald	July 6, 1943—



## THE HISTORY OF PITTSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

### CITY SOLICITORS

Walter F. Hawkins	Feb. 2, 1891 to Dec. 31, 1895
John F. Noxon	Jan. 6, 1896 to Feb. 6, 1898
Walter F. Hawkins	Feb. 7, 1898 to Feb. 5, 1899
John C. Crosby	Feb. 6, 1899 to Jan. 31, 1904
Milton B. Warner	Feb. 1, 1904 to Feb. 4, 1912
James Fallon	Feb. 5, 1912 to Jan. 31, 1915
John J. Whittlesey	Feb. 1, 1915 to Feb. 4, 1917
John Barker	Feb. 5, 1917 to Feb. 1, 1920
Michael L. Eisner	Feb. 2, 1920 to Feb. 4, 1923
Joseph M. McMahon	Feb. 5, 1923 to Feb. 1, 1925
Walter C. Kellogg	Feb. 2, 1925 to Jan. 31, 1926
Sheridan R. Cate	Feb. 1, 1926 to Feb. 5, 1928
John F. Noxon, Jr.	Feb. 6, 1928 to Feb. 3, 1929
Francis M. McMahon	Feb. 4, 1929 to Jan. 1, 1934
Charles R. Alberti	Jan. 2, 1934 to Jan. 4, 1938
James M. Rosenthal	Jan. 5, 1938 to Jan. 4, 1948
Francis J. Quirico	Jan. 5, 1948 to April 30, 1952
Paul A. Tamburello	May 1, 1952 to Nov. 3, 1956
Edwin E. Reder	Nov. 4, 1956—

### CITY TREASURERS

Erwin H. Kennedy	Feb. 2, 1891 to Feb. 3, 1907
Fred M. Platt	Feb. 4, 1907 to May 9, 1931
Frank C. Robinson	
Acting Treasurer from May 9, 1931 to Feb. 4, 1932	
Jay P. Barnes	Feb. 5, 1932 to Jan. 14, 1934
H. Edward Hayn	Jan. 15, 1934 to Sept. 30, 1950
John J. Fitzgerald	Oct. 1, 1950—

### COLLECTORS OF TAXES

Edward McA. Learned	Feb. 2, 1891 to Jan. 31, 1892
Harry D. Sisson	Feb. 1, 1892 to Feb. 3, 1895
William F. Francis	Feb. 4, 1895 to Feb. 1, 1896
Frank R. Strong	Feb. 2, 1896 to Feb. 6, 1898

## APPENDIX

James W. Synan	Feb. 7, 1898 to Jan. 31, 1904
Frank Bartlett	Feb. 1, 1904 to Feb. 4, 1912
Matthew J. Capeless	Feb. 5, 1912 to Jan. 31, 1915
Clifford H. Dickson	Feb. 1, 1915 to Aug. 31, 1921
John T. McDonald	Sept. 1, 1921 to Feb. 1, 1925
Lemuel G. Lloyd	Feb. 2, 1925 to Feb. 4, 1932
Daniel T. Mullen	Feb. 5, 1932 to Jan. 14, 1934
Lemuel G. Lloyd	Jan. 15, 1934—

## COMMISSIONERS OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Willys M. Monroe	Jan. 15, 1934 to June 10, 1941 (Entered military service)
Harry B. Franchere	(Military substitute) July 1, 1941 to Dec. 31, 1941
Frances M. Tebeau	(Temporary military substitute) Jan. 1, 1942 to April 1, 1942
John W. Trask	(Military substitute) April 1, 1942 to June 15, 1946
Willys M. Monroe	June 15, 1946 to Dec. 31, 1955
Harold Stein	Jan. 2, 1956—

## COMMISSIONERS OF PUBLIC WORKS

Arthur B. Farnham	Jan. 22, 1934 to July 1, 1940
Leon H. Reed	July 2, 1940 to Dec. 31, 1945
Canfield S. Dickie	Jan. 1, 1946 to Jan. 18, 1948
Archibald K. Sloper	Jan. 19, 1948 to Jan. 22, 1950
Robert L. McLellan	Jan. 23, 1950 to Oct. 31, 1952
Morris E. Lundberg	Nov. 1, 1952 to March 31, 1956
John F. Daniels	April 1, 1956—



THE HISTORY OF PITTSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

DIRECTORS OF STATE AID AND SOLDIERS' RELIEF  
and  
DIRECTORS OF VETERANS' SERVICES

The Department of State Aid and Soldiers' Relief was established in December 1927; the name was changed to Veterans' Service Department in September 1946.

William H. Eaton	Dec. 27, 1927 to May 28, 1934
Allen E. Hinkle	June 25, 1934 to Sept. 17, 1935
Charles H. Hodecker	(Temporary) Sept. 18, 1935 to Jan. 31, 1936
Walter V. Messer	Feb. 1, 1936 to July 30, 1941
John J. Shields	Aug. 1, 1941 to Dec. 31, 1948
Theodore J. Handerek	Jan. 1, 1949—

SUPERINTENDENTS OF SCHOOLS

Thomas H. Day	About 1885 to April 2, 1891
Ayres M. Edwards	May 25, 1891 to Jan. 4, 1894
Eugene Bouton	Feb. 5, 1894 to Aug. 1904
Charles A. Byram	Sept. 1, 1904 to Sept. 1, 1909
Clarence J. Russell	Acting Supt., Sept. 1, 1909 to June 1, 1910
Clair G. Persons	Sept. 1, 1910 to Aug. 1, 1919
John F. Gannon	Jan. 13, 1920 to June 19, 1934
Edward J. Russell	July 3, 1934—

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The index is designed as a guide to principal names and subjects related to Pittsfield's history. Appropriate chapters should be consulted for items not found. Omitted, among others, are names of officers of clubs and societies (for which see entries under respective organizations) and names of members of professions listed as such (for which see titles of professions, e.g. *artists*).



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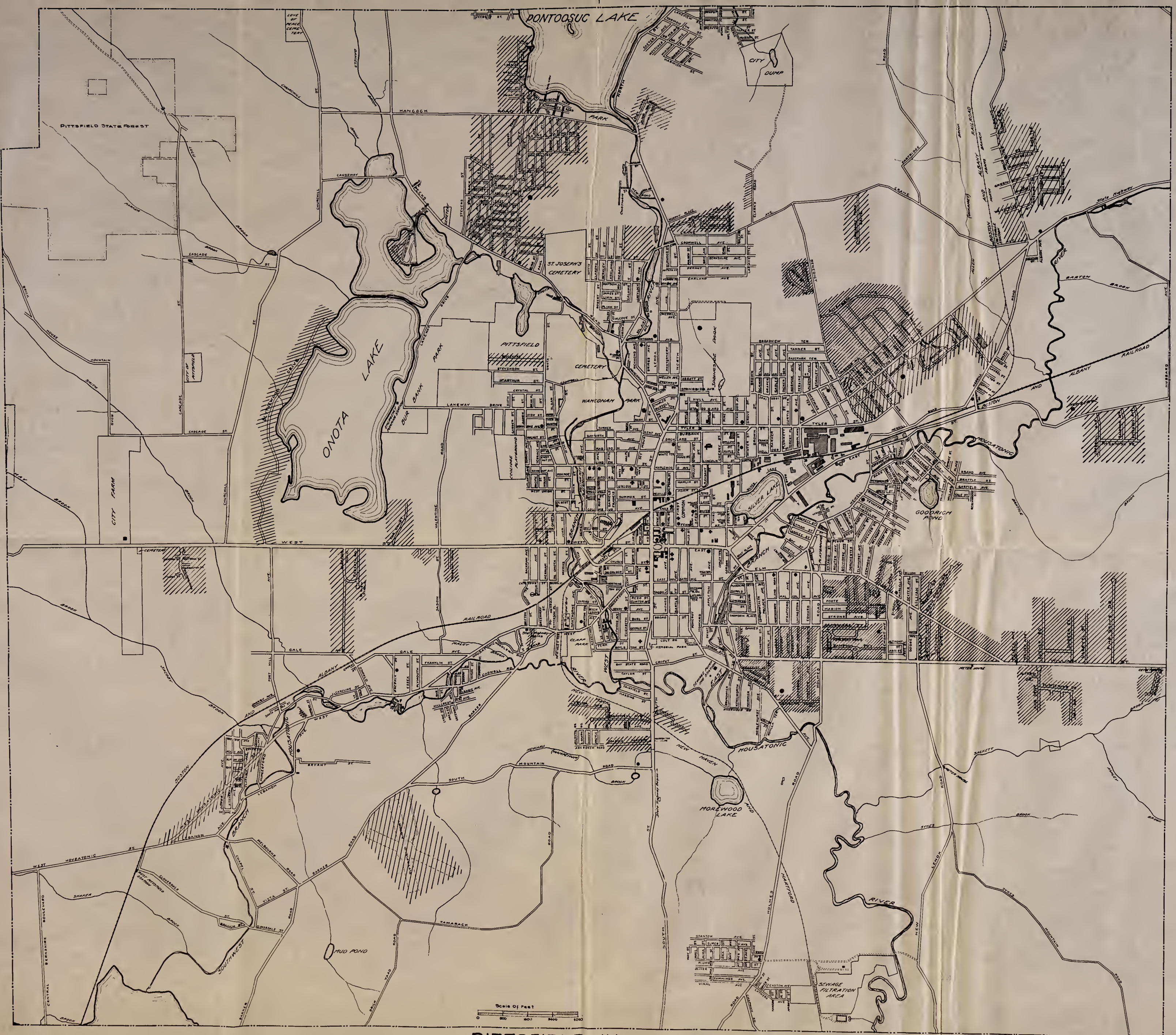












**PITTSFIELD IN 1955**  
SHADED AREA SHOWING DEVELOPMENT SINCE THE YEAR 1916







